



MAKING HER HIS WIFE

CORRA HARRIS



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MAKING HER HIS WIFE

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A Circuit Rider's Widow

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In Search of a Husband

The Recording Angel



"She was deliberately flinging plates, cups, glasses, everything as she came to it, upon the floor, and she was working like lightning"

MAKING HER HIS WIFE

BY
CORRA HARRIS



Illustrated
By W. B. King

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12
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357
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

“She was deliberately flinging plates, cups,
glasses, everything as she came to it, upon the
floor, and she was working like lightning”
(See page 155) *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE
“ ‘And isn’t marriage savage? Of course it is.
Fiercest relation on earth. Can’t make it any-
thing else’ ” 16

“ ‘Such an adventure!’ exclaimed the girl,
spreading her hands in an ecstatic gesture ” . 32

“The next moment the masqueraders were
astonished to see a knight falling head over
heels to the ballroom floor” 272

PART ONE

MAKING HER HIS WIFE

PART ONE

IN 1845, when the South was a feudal civilisation which produced beautiful women, brilliant orators, and valuable slaves, and when the *Southern Literary Messenger* published continued poems of fifty thousand words which were eagerly read by the beautiful women and the brilliant orators, Colonel Phillip Arms, from Virginia, moved to Cherokee, Georgia, and established his dynasty there. He brought with him the proverbial hundred slaves. Shortly afterward other Virginians came with their retinues and wealth. They were in the nature of courtiers to Colonel Arms, and they were prevailed upon to follow him by the fact that the Colonel had discovered in the land iron ore which was even more valuable than Virginia cotton.

Cherokee quickly grew into one of those ante-bellum towns built according to the more or less mag-

nificent fancy of the ante-bellum aristocracy. Every house in it was a mansion, and there were not many of them. The white population did not exceed two hundred souls; the slaves numbered nearly a thousand. Fifteen years later the Arms Iron Foundry on the river beyond the town did a tremendous business casting cannon and moulding minie balls for the Confederate Army.

This was the state of affairs when Sherman, on his march to the sea, surrounded the town. It was defended by a garrison in the Foundry—defended until the smokestack looked like an old black pepper pot punctured by ten thousand bullet holes, until the walls were rent by shells and every man within had fallen.

When the refugees who fled at the approach of the Federal forces returned and saw by the graves in the glade beyond the town how many men had died in their defence, they changed the name. They called it Valhalla, in memory of the heroes slain in battle.

Many years later a Northern syndicate built a railroad to somewhere which, quite by accident, ran along the ridge between the town and the Confed-

erate Cemetery. This is the only thing which divides the living from the dead in that place.

Nowhere else, except in the long years' wake of Sherman's march through Georgia, may such a town be found as Valhalla—not ugly, but prematurely old and sad; not squalid, but roomily poverty-stricken, with paint worn from its weather boarding and rubbed from its high cornices; with faded green blinds and tall, fluted porch columns shrunken and parted between the flutes like slits between the plaits of an elegant but indigent old gentleman's shirt front. Lilac-scented lilies standing like candles in the dark shade of old gardens. Roses and vines climbing over it as they creep over the graves in the glade, covered with the dust of memories, governed by epitaphs. In short, an old dead town, which gave up its splendid ghost upon the day the Foundry fell and every man there fell with it.

It is easier to recover from anything than from a particularly glorious past. If the garrison had surrendered to the Federals, Valhalla would not have been Valhalla; it would have been a flourishing city with a manufacturing plant in the glade where tombstones stand and lean above the grass like

dingy leaves turned and blown from the tragic book of war and death.

Other poorer people moved in after the war and built slatternly houses round and round the old Avenue where the mansions still stood like gray mausoleums of that same glorious past. Nothing now remained of the famous Arms estate but the ruined Foundry with its tumbled ore fields overgrown with weeds and brambles, the old Arms place on the Avenue, and young John Arms who lived there with his widowed mother.

He was the most distinguished looking man in Valhalla and he had never accomplished anything commensurate with his appearance. But for the fate of the heroic garrison when his grandfather, Colonel Arms, also lost his life, he might have been president of the Cherokee Steel and Iron Company. As it was, there was no such company. He kept a hardware store, and sold plows, horse collars, cooking stoves, and pewter spoons, crockery and glass syrup pitchers, and he was not successful in that business, partly because no business could be successfully conducted in Valhalla, and chiefly because he lacked imagination, that financial emotion which

inspires so many modern Americans to create opportunities. He was not exactly dull, but coldly temperate. He was endowed with silence as another man may be with a gift. Not a forbidding silence, but the reserve of one who has not yet made up his mind to deliver himself.

Valhalla cherished him and wondered what he meant. He was the anti-climax of the Arms dynasty. You could not call him a plebeian, but he had more of the virtues of a man than the graces of a gentleman. He belonged to a type which is to be found only in the South—a cross between the primitive and the old feudal aristocrat. Wherever you find this man he is a trifle out of drawing with the situation.

In the first edition of Ridpath's "History of the United States" there is a picture of Powhatan. It is a very good likeness because it is not a photograph, but the ideal of a noble primitive man drawn in the features of the North American Indian. The resemblance between the picture and John Arms was so striking that the story went in Valhalla that his great grandmother, the wife of Phillip, was too dark, that she was pigeon-toed, and that,

in fact, John was descended from the famous chief.

He was not tall, but he had what may be called an instinct for height, a lift in his sense of presence which made him appear taller than he really was. His shoulders spread at right angles from his neck and were perfectly square. He was so narrow through the hips that he never looked quite right in his clothes. His skin was sallow, not dark. He had the high cheek bones, the peculiar wide-bridged nose, and a mouth of such repose and strength that it might have been drawn upon the face of a stone, no tenderness, no humour. The long upper lip was flat and almost overlapped the straight lower lip. A square chin with no curve in it. A lofty but retreating brow. Gray eyes deeply sunken, and coarse, straight dark hair.

He was thirty years old and not married.

Mrs. Arms sat in awe of her son. She was the kind of woman who would never have stood in any other relation to the opposite sex. It was too much like withstanding it. Being an old-fashioned gentlewoman she was incapable of that. She was industrious between times in her house, but since he had reached manhood's estate she constantly sat

to John. It was a pose she had toward men. And it was an evidence of serious agitation when she departed from it by showing any kind of physical activity in his presence. The effect was soothing, dignified. When he came down to breakfast, he always found her sitting at the table waiting for him. When he returned from the store in the evenings, she would be sitting again in the old faded parlour, or upon the veranda, still waiting for him. It was as if the hands of her spirit were folded upon her breast in some inarticulate prayer for this her son who was a stranger to her.

She was an ample old lady who wore gray striped, full-skirted gowns, with large lavender-coloured flowers between the stripes, and a white tatted collar pinned with a brooch which was a miniature of John's father painted from a picture made in his youth. You will have observed this about women who wear husband's miniatures. They are always old women and the picture in their brooches is always that of the young man whom they married many years ago. The crayon portrait of John's father which hung in the parlour was that of a meek old man with a long white Moses beard. The minia-

ture pinned upon Mrs. Arms's breast was that of a gay young rascal who did not in the least resemble his son John.

This was a matter to which Mrs. Arms had given much thought in the confusion of her simple mind. She had done this thing. She had produced a son who did not resemble his father either in character or appearance. Neither was he like herself. She was fair, with the oval face of the Anglo-Saxon. She had never heard of reversion to type. In any case, she would not have understood that. Mr. Arms, senior—she had always called him “Mr. Arms,” even in the privacy of their chamber—had been a lively, eloquent, irresponsible person in his youth, dissipated. And he was sufficiently enterprising in his mature years to have failed three times in business. Any woman instinctively understands such a man as that. But no woman can understand one, even if he is her own son, who is not subject to emotional aberrations; who is never betrayed to her by his weaknesses; who appears to be moral without an effort; who never fails and never succeeds, and who keeps his own counsel as if there were a sacred covenant he had made with silence.

This was why she sat patiently in awe of her son. She did not understand him. And for that reason she was anxious for him. When a man is entirely right, every woman knows that there is something wrong with him. He is not all there.

The matter about which she concerned herself most was the fact that John was not married, and would not marry. No mother really wishes her son to marry, but every mother knows she ought to wish it; therefore Mrs. Arms was troubled because John showed what she feared were persistent bachelor tendencies. His interest in women was keen, but it was not romantic. He was a student of that sex. And the man who studies women is not nearly so apt to fall into the illusion of love. She did not know when John began his psychological investigations of femininity. But it had been going on for a long time, since he returned from college in his junior year to take charge of the remnants of his father's business. He was not cynical in his observations to her upon this subject, but he was fearfully astute, which was queer in a man. At the same time he was fearfully astute in his comments upon girls in general. One might have sup-

posed that he had a wide experience of them, much wider than the maidens of Valhalla afforded. As a matter of fact, he was an attic philosopher of women. Hypothecating whom he did not know upon what he did know. And he frequently made cryptic remarks on this subject which disturbed his mother. She could never discover what kind of girl he would marry, but his ideas of a wife were not familiar to her. This was the only thing she could worry about, so she worried about that.

It was seven o'clock in the evening of a day early in September, 1914. Yellow leaves hung like flecks of gold among the green boughs of the trees in the Avenue.

Mrs. Arms was sitting on the veranda, looking like a faded posy, a gentle, old, sundown lady, the sweeter part of the autumn twilight.

John came through the door from the hall and sat down near her. This was a habit they had in pleasant weather. After supper they sat together on the veranda and said nothing.

He was smoking, and he was thinking, merely recalling the scene on the Square that afternoon. Valhalla was vaguely excited, something was hap-

pening in the world at last which aroused the splendid ghost of memories in that place. Belgium was dying. The German army was marching on Paris. Six thousand men lay dead upon the field. "Another case of Sedan!" the old men said, as they gathered in groups with the evening papers in their hands. Merchants came out of their stores. Farmers halted their wagons and left their teams while they learned the news. Dogs got themselves kicked, and yelped bloody murder because they wished to share the sensation, whatever it was. Colonel Seaborn Ripley had been going about all the afternoon trying to organise a military company which was to be called the Valhalla Volunteers. One might have inferred that Paris was only fifty miles distant and that Valhalla would march to the front in the morning. John had his placid share in this purely imaginary performance. He had been made lieutenant of the Volunteers. Later in the afternoon he had motored out to the Foundry in the Colonel's car with that old veteran, who declared that he wished to refresh his memory on "certain details." Also he had been commissioned to purchase arms and other equipment for the company.

Being in the hardware business, it was supposed that he could manage this with proper economy.

But Mrs. Arms was far removed from these activities. She rarely went down-town. She did not know of this revival of militarism. All wars were over so far as she was concerned. She was thinking of something which belonged to the eternal order of things. She was crocheting another tidy. At this hour she was always doing that. Every chair in the Arms house had a white web over the back done in some kind of stitch.

As her needle flew in and out she glanced up over the rim of her glasses from time to time at her son. He was not aware of this inspection. He continued to smoke with his feet elevated, village fashion, upon the banister. Mrs. Arms worked faster. She knew that when he finished the cigar he would go in and audit his books until bed-time. The cigar was going fast when she began to fidget like an old hen spreading her wings. She arose, went into the parlour, returned, sat down, and fumbled in her work basket as if she had lost something. It was her courage. She kept that in her work basket, and she could never find it when John was around.

She stood up, walked to the other end of the veranda, seized the vagrant tendril of a clematis vine which grew there, and tucked it into the trellis as if she had corrected a child. Then she went back into the house. When she came out the second time she walked swiftly, and she looked as grim as the pathetic sweetness of her countenance permitted, as if she had at last taken the bit between her teeth and was about to do to John what she ought to do.

He turned his head and looked at her, in the absent-minded way a man stares at a woman when he is pursuing a train of thought which leads in another direction.

He understood that she would presently take him to task about something. She always did this way when she had him on her mind. She cackled with her skirts, she fussed herself, primped her mouth, and looked at him over the rim of her glasses.

"What is it, Mother?" he asked, tossing away the end of his cigar.

"Nothing. Why?" she answered quickly.

"I thought you were going to say something," he accused, smiling.

She resumed the tidy, sighed, dropped a stitch, and gave it up.

"John," she exclaimed suddenly, in a quavering, plaintive voice, "when your father was your age he had been married six years!"

"Yes, Mother," answered her son, and waited.

"You should have had a wife long ago, John! Why don't you marry?"

"I will, Mother!" he answered, smiling broadly at her so rarely accusative, so primly submissive to whatever fate, now so faintly in revolt, so timidly belligerent, with a pink stain purpling in either cheek like a dying rose.

She went on presently:

"A woman gets through with her feelings just for herself when her first child is born. Then she feels for him, she thinks for him, she loves for him, and he is her hope and her salvation. Then, John, when he grows up, when he is no longer her child, her feelings, her thoughts run ahead. They pass him, too. They take hold and live again in his children. If he has none, she is just childless again in her old age. Do you think I like to crochet tidies? I do that because there is no one for whom



“‘And isn’t marriage savage? Of course it is. Fiercest relation on earth. (‘an’t make it anything else’”

"I can make the dearer little things!" she concluded tearfully.

"Bless my soul, Mother!" he exclaimed, "I—what can I do?"

"You can get married like a sensible man! There's Anna Berry, she's a nice girl, she would make you a good wife. And she's fond of you, John," she returned, determined to get down to particulars in this business.

"Mother, I want to make the woman I marry a good wife to me."

"I don't understand," she said plaintively.

"No, you wouldn't. Can't explain, but I feel I must marry an enemy."

"An enemy?"

"A man generally does, anyhow."

"My son, you don't know what you are saying."

"Yes, I do. It's the right way; always was the natural way until men fell into the weakness of love-making."

"To hear you, one might think you expected to chase a woman and club her. It's savage."

"And isn't marriage savage? Of course it is. Fiercest relation on earth. Can't make it anything

else until you make your own wife. If you don't, she'll make you. Always tries that, don't she?" he said.

"I don't know where you got such ideas," she said, sighing.

"Born with 'em," he answered, laughing. "By the way, Mother, I'm going to Atlanta to-morrow. Had a big order for rifles to-day. Can't get back for a day or two. Better ask Anna to come over at night."

"Very well."

He stood up, looked down at her, still smiling. Then he bent and kissed her.

"Don't worry, Mother, about what I said just now. I'll probably never marry, because I shall never find my dear enemy in your sex," he said, with penitent courtesy.

"Nothing would be easier if you look for her in the wrong direction, John," answered the old lady, still ruffled.

.

Late in the afternoon of the following day a young man shouldered his way through the holiday throng on Whitehall Street in Atlanta. No one noticed him; he noticed every one. This is the

mark of the stranger from the country in a city. There, people are so accustomed to people that they never see them if they can avoid it. But to the man who has lived all his life where there is more space and less of the fever of humanity, every face he sees in the crowd is a leaf to be read, a riddle to be solved, something to be believed or rejected.

This young man's countenance was an open country, with strange winds blowing across it. One moment you would have said, "This man is dull. He does not think in the terms of life." The next moment you would have said, "This man is wise. His feet are set in the way of life. Nothing can move him from the right order of things. And nothing can withstand him." Again, as the people pressed him, as he caught the contagion of all passions from these other bodies of himself, his eyes flamed, his nostrils spread, his face flushed with fierce desire, homeless emotion. Then you would have said, "This man is dangerous. He is intoxicated, and he is ravenous!"

But no one thought of these things, because there were too many to think. When you are in a crowd, you do not think, you only feel. You are not your-

self, but a part of the whole; breathing, pushing on, an emotion of that restless body.

It was Labour Day. Every moment the throng increased. Thousands of women, thousands of men, all excited, all going somewhere in a hurry.

There had been a parade of automobiles by the Piedmont Driving Club. Presently the street cars were blocked by the long procession of these gaily-decorated motors moving slowly up the street like a long, crawling caterpillar, an enormous composite of every hue and splendour of all the caterpillars in the world. They were covered with flowers. The wheels were revolving wreaths; streamers flew; women sat like lilies and roses in all this floating splendour of colour, smiling, flirting, living their hour of perfume and joy. Men stared at them, answering eye to eye, smile for smile.

The last car passed. John Arms stood upon the curb, lifted and confused by the brilliant spectacle. The throng which for a moment had paused, dissolved, hurried on.

Suddenly everybody stopped, gasped, held his breath. Street car bells clanged, policemen rushed forward shouting, waving their hands imperatively.

A little runabout came roaring into the street. It was covered with goldenrod. The wheels were solid masses of yellow chrysanthemums. It moved swiftly, zigzagging, without reference to the laws of traffic. There was only one person in it—a girl, wearing a shining black coat with yellow facings. Her head was thrown back, her face flushed, her red lips parted. She held to the wheel desperately, and stared wildly at the crowd with wide-open, terror-stricken black eyes which seemed to shriek for help.

At this moment the car turned its yellow nose straight toward the curb where John was standing, and made for him. The next instant the front wheels were upon the sidewalk. And John himself was flung high, only to land with astonishing agility upon the running board.

Having done its worst, the thing stopped. The girl flung her hands and cried:

“Oh, I can’t make it go on!”

“And a good thing you can’t, Miss,” shouted an indignant policeman. “Where was you aiming to go?”

“Please help me. It won’t move,” she said, ignoring the officer and addressing herself to the

dishevelled young man whom Providence seemed to have dropped upon the running board.

"You've got your foot on the brake," exclaimed John.

"Oh, is that it? But if I take my foot off, this thing will bump into that drugstore!" she sobbed.

"Hold it down, Miss, till I get your name and book you for charges!" exclaimed the officer.

"Olive Thurston, One Hundred and Twenty-three Peachtree Street," she admitted, tearfully, pressing hard upon the brake.

He looked up respectfully at this, and said politely:

"You can't run this car, Miss; you don't know how. I'll call an officer."

"No, please don't!" she said, and looked up distractedly at John, who returned the gaze with the calm of a man who has made up his mind for all time.

He reached in, seized a rod she had forgotten, gave it a wrench, and peace descended upon the scene.

"It's all right; we can manage now, thank you," said the young woman haughtily, as she slid to the other side.

"Well, I bedam! Flings him heels over head, and then she takes him for her chauffeur!" muttered the policeman, as John grasped the wheel, backed the car, and started off.

He steered around the next corner into a less crowded thoroughfare. The girl sat beside him, very erect, but pale and trembling. Not a word was spoken until they came out upon the Fort McPherson Road in West End. Then, for the first time, she glanced at him, turned her head away.

"You saved my life and nearly lost your own," she said, with a sob.

"What made you do it?" he demanded severely, without taking his eyes from the road.

"It was a wager," she said, beginning to laugh hysterically. "This is Dicky Blake's car. We were in the parade—and I bet twenty-five dollars that I could take it home along Whitehall Street through the crowd, you know. It was for the Belgium Relief Fund."

"What was?"

"The twenty-five dollars; we've done everything trying to raise money for that."

"Ever drive a car before?"

"Only for a block or two. That was why it was a wager, you see," she explained simply.

"Often take a chance like that?" he demanded, after a pause.

"Well, not exactly, but I never miss taking one if I can help it," she said, then caught her breath, flushed, and stared at him, with the level dark glance of the fear-not woman.

He was looking straight at her for the first time, not daringly, but with that challenge always spoken between a man and a girl, with the eyes, not the lips.

"Who are you?" she asked coolly.

"Not a highwayman, as you begin to suspect, nor a chauffeur," he answered, smiling, but with equal coolness. "I'm John Arms, from the little old dead town of Valhalla. Been dead myself, I think, until to-day."

Still the measuring glances between them like the crossing of swords. Still he smiled like an honest antagonist.

"John, not Phillip, of course, who did something awful during the Battle of the Foundry," murmured the girl thoughtfully.

"Died there, after discharging a cannon filled with scrap iron at the enemy."

"I have heard Uncle Richard tell about that," she said.

"He was my grandfather—highly respectable ancestry, never drink, never have gambled until this day in my life," he added, still covering her with that encircling gaze which separated her and marooned her from all the world.

"And to-day, you gamble?"

"On a sure thing," he agreed.

"What, may I ask?" in a tone which meant, "I dare you!"

"On myself," he returned, quite unexpectedly. At the same time the car shot ahead at increasing speed along the open country road.

"Where are we going?" she demanded suddenly, looking about her.

"For a drive," he answered cheerfully.

"Dickie will be crazy!"

"I hope he will be dead!"

"Are you——?" she hesitated, as if she would not countenance this offence against her own dignity. But he answered:

“Yes, I am—— No, not yet. And you who never miss a chance,” he challenged, “you’ll take this one. It’s a greater one for me than for you!”

“Really!”

“Ah, she’s afraid to dare, and she’s too wickedly woman to give it up!” he interpreted triumphantly to himself.

“You must turn back, Mr. Arms!”—in that tone a woman uses when she calls even her enemy, man, to her defence, and he dares not refuse for the honour of his manhood.

“You really want to go back?” he said, stopping the car, and looking at her with a kind of secret intelligence.

She sat for a moment perfectly still, with her face turned from him. Then she pressed her hands to her breast and began to laugh. She moved back and forth in a perfect gale of mirth. Then to his amazement she looked at him plaintively, with tears in her eyes.

“It’s ridiculous, all this you know—and not—not right,” she added almost in a whisper.

“It is not ridiculous. Probably the most natural,

the gravest thing you ever did. And right," he returned.

"Are you—sure?"

"On my honour."

"Then drive on; I don't care! I'm so depressingly happy."

"Yes, I know; as if somewhere beyond these shadows that droop like gray wings over the earth we were going to meet something terrible and sweet. Neither of us wants to, but we long to. And we know that we cannot escape—not now!" he said, sending the car forward into the deepening shade between the hills.

Love is the present tense of life, immediate. It is a long time dying. But nothing else comes so swiftly into the heart. You do not learn how to love, you always know how. You only wait for it like beggars at the High Gates of Life. And when it comes, all the words you have, all the ways you know, they are useless for the speech and meaning of that. This is why lovers sing to each other first with their eyes, speak in symbols, act so contrarily and strangely, according to the standards of those who do not love. Each is a dear and dangerous mystery

to the other. Each fears the other. And God himself cannot save these victims henceforth from the anguish and sweetness of love.

The translation this man and this woman made to themselves of the struggle between them was:

John to John: "I have found my dear enemy!"

Olive to Olive: "Who is this man?"

John: "I will have her!"

Olive: "I am afraid of him!"

John: "She knows; she is already afraid of me."

Olive: "I must not permit him to make love to me."

John: "She is willing. She only hangs back from feminine deceit."

Olive: "I cannot trust myself. He must turn back!"

John: "Here is the test. She will not insist upon going back. She wants to be here."

Olive: "I am lost! I cannot will myself away from him."

John: "She flies to a woman's last refuge, propriety."

Olive: "I can only trust to his honour now."

John: "She places the responsibility upon me."

Olive: "It is just for this hour. I shall never see him again."

John: "I will see her to-morrow."

.

It was seven o'clock in the evening. Mrs. Thurston sat beside the 'phone desk behind the staircase in the hall of the Thurston residence on Peachtree Street.

"Information," she wailed, "give me Police Headquarters!"

A young man stood facing her. He wore exaggeratedly correct evening clothes. His shirt front glistened like snow on a black cat's back. His face was long, flushed. His chin receded like the point he had missed in life. His hair was combed flat and straight back, affected simplicity in the simplest of all products, a man who was nothing and could do nothing except spend the fortune he had inherited.

"Horrible to be calling the Station House, and about my own niece," she exclaimed, addressing him while she waited with the receiver cupped to her ear. "I've never spoken to a policeman in my life."

"No use to worry," he replied. "Olive's a good sport; she *always* lands on her feet."

"She's probably—landed on her head this time. Why'd you let her—— What? Is this Police Headquarters? . . . This is Mrs. Richard Thurston speaking to you," she began, turning her attention to the 'phone.

She explained. Miss Olive Thurston, her niece, had undertaken to drive a car down Whitehall Street. She was not accustomed to driving a motor. She should have arrived an hour since. She had not returned. She was anxious, and so forth and so on. Yes, the car was decorated in yellow. Yes, she wore a black motor coat. She paused to listen. She gasped, fell back in her chair, and closed her eyes.

"Oh, Dickie, they've made a case against her for reckless driving—— What? Nearly killed a man? Drove off with him in the car? Merciful Heavens!" she cried, dropping the receiver and closing her eyes.

Dickie hastened forward.

"Don't mind me," she cried faintly. "Call the hospitals!"

At this moment the doorbell rang. The next moment Olive whisked in, accompanied by a man who wore a pepper and salt coat which was short

but which still denied any relation to his person from the waist down, and black trousers which bagged at the knees. He stood behind her like a graven image, as calm and remote as that.

"Olive!" shrieked the old lady.

"Such an adventure!" exclaimed the girl, spreading her hands in an ecstatic gesture.

She was radiant. Her face glowed like a gold or Ophir rose. Black curling wisps of hair escaped from her close-fitting turban, as if the wind had blown this bloom of woman from thundering clouds.

"Where have you been?" demanded her aunt indignantly.

"I present Mr. John Arms! My Aunt, Mrs. Thurston; Mr. Blake," she said, turning to her companion. And then, facing her astonished relative, merely including Blake incidentally, she added:

"You'll have to ask him where we've been; I don't know!"

"We went for a drive after the accident, on the McPherson Road," answered the graven image, bowing and addressing himself grimly to Blake.

"Then there was an accident?"

"Yes, I nearly killed Mr. Arms, but I didn't really hurt him at all. And, Dickie, give me that money; I won!" she exclaimed, holding out her hand. "Also you may pay my fine to-morrow in the police court. It was your car."

Mrs. Thurston had risen. She offered her hand to John.

"Pleased to know you," in a tone which indicated that she was very much displeased with him, with Olive, and the whole situation.

"Yes, Auntie, he saved my life," added Olive.

"Seems to have gone on saving it!" thought Blake to himself as he acknowledged this doubtfully prolonged service with a bow.

"And you are going to stay to dinner," Olive entreated, swimming back to John.

"Of course!" conceded Mrs. Thurston politely but none too cordially.

"No, thanks, I have an engagement," answered Mr. Arms, offering his hand to Olive.

"Then I'll see you to-morrow," she said.

"Yes," keeping her to himself for the length of one brief glance as he took his departure.

"Did he—did that person say that he would see



*“Such an adventure!” exclaimed the girl, spreading
her hands in an ecstatic gesture”*

you to-morrow, Olive?" demanded Dickie as the door closed after the "person."

All this time he had not spoken. He had been doing a certain distasteful sum in addition and subtraction which left him as a remainder.

"Yes," answered Olive without looking at him, as she threw off her coat. "We are going to have lunch at the Driving Club. Don't you want to come?"

"No!" he returned promptly.

"And I simply can't go, Olive," chimed in Mrs. Thurston. "I have that engagement with the Walthams! What are you going to do?"

"Lunch with Mr. Arms, of course!" answered Olive, with cheerful emphasis, as if she had suddenly outgrown chaperons.

.

The next day Mrs. Arms received this telegram from her son:

Detained by important business, may not return before Saturday. JOHN.

.

It was half-past nine o'clock on the Saturday morning predicted by John in this same telegram.

Olive Thurston was seated before her dressing table. She wore a white silk something which revealed the curves of her young body and which spread with every lift of her arms like shimmering white wings.

She was preening herself, pecking daintily with fingers at the curls over her ears. She drew them back, smoothed her hair until it lay parted and puritan prim about her brow. Then she made a face at herself in the mirror, a sad good little face. She thrust out her rounded chin, let the corners of her mouth droop until her red lips spelled a kind of childish piety. She contemplated the effect from beneath lowered lids and was not satisfied.

"It's this horrid little turned-up, sophisticated nose that spoils everything. And I can't change it!" She giggled, flirting herself this way and that, contemplating the side view and the back view of her art from a hand mirror which reflected the image she made in the larger glass.

After much thought she reached back and plucked two short tendrils from the braids behind so that they lay like smoke rings on the nape of her white neck.

"They do look unintentional, as if I could not help it. And they are just right!" she murmured.

There was a knock at the door.

"Is that you, Thompson? Never mind. I don't need you this morning. I am doing my own hair," she called out, still absorbed in that business.

"Are you up, Olive?" came a cool voice, authoritative but feminine, from the other side of the door.

"Oh, it's you, Auntie. Come in!"

Mrs. Thurston entered.

She was very handsome, with the expression of an old worn-out beauty who has come down to the hard nails of worldly wisdom and means to enforce it.

Her black eyes, still brilliant beneath the wrinkled lids, smarted angrily upon her niece as she advanced.

"Don't muss me, Auntie! If you are going to kiss me, do it somewhere else. It has taken me an hour to make up," cried that young person, who continued to pluck and dab at her head with absorbed attention.

"What on earth are you doing to yourself?" exclaimed the old lady.

"I am trying to make Olive Thurston look sweet and good and innocent. Now, doesn't she?"

"No, she does not. You look like an adventuress who has taken up church work, if you ask me!" snapped Mrs. Thurston, seating herself with the air of one who has come on purpose to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

"That's it exactly!" laughed Olive. "*I am* an adventuress; all the girls in my set are. And now suppose I am going to take up church work. That would be an adventure!"

"This is no joking matter, Olive; I want to talk to you seriously."

"Oh, not this early in the morning, Auntie. You know you are never quite agreeable until afternoon."

"I have no intention of being agreeable."

"Yes, I know the symptoms, dear; you've lain awake all night, couldn't sleep."

"Yes, I have!"

"Then you did sleep?"

"No, I didn't—not a wink!"

"Thinking about me, of course?"

"Yes, and I must speak to you, Olive."

"Well, if you must, you must, but wait till I get ready. I can't stand it perpendicularly," she said, flinging herself upon the bed and folding her hand

over her head. Her knees fitted neatly over the side. She began to do a whispering dance with her slippered feet upon the rug.

"I'm ready, go ahead," she sighed. "But hurry; I'll have to do my hair again."

"This affair has gone far enough, Olive."

"What affair?"

"This flirtation with that bleached Indian you've picked up."

"He is not an Indian, Auntie. I wish he was!"

"Well, then, who is he, what is he?"

"He—he—really, I don't know exactly who he is. He's very reticent."

"He's not a gentleman, I can tell you that!" snapped the old lady.

"No, not what we call a gentleman. That's his fascination. I'm so tired of gentlemen. He's the first man I ever met in my life."

"He's a village clown. He doesn't know how to dress, and he doesn't know what to do with his hands, and he's——"

"Oh, yes, he does, dear; he works with them," Olive interrupted. "He's a hardware merchant, handles plows and things!"

"Olive!"

"Yes," exclaimed the girl with animation, as she sat up beaming, "and you ought to feel his hands. They are hard!"

"Olive! do you mean to admit that you've been holding hands with that—that *person*?" demanded Mrs. Thurston, gazing in horror at her niece.

"I have! But it was no easy matter, I can tell you, Auntie; not in the least like avoiding Dickie Blake's flabby fins—like—my dear, it was like having a black and angry eagle clamp you with his claws!" she said, with delicious awe.

"You are perfectly shameless!" gasped her aunt.

"I know I am. It's the way I've been brought up. But he's not shameless. He didn't want to do it. He hates me because he loves me."

Mrs. Thurston was too scandalised for words.

"It was last night at the Ralston's ball. You know how absurd Dickie was—Dickie's cocktails don't go to his head. They can't, nothing there. They go to his heels. He wanted every dance. At last I made some excuse, got away, went out in the garden, and there *he* was roosting on one of the benches, like that, you know."

"Like a burglar!" sniffed Mrs. Thurston.

"No, he had an invitation. I asked Mrs. Ralston to send him one."

"You are making yourself perfectly ridiculous, letting everybody know of this, this infatuation, this hysteria. Mr. Blake was furious last night."

"Yes, I know it. When he came out looking for me—that was when it happened—John caught me to him. He groaned, he was so mad with himself for doing it!" She laughed triumphantly.

"Has it gone as far as that—calling him 'John' and allowing him to embrace you?"

"Not exactly embrace. But it has got as far as 'John' and 'Olive,'" she admitted. "And why are you making such a fuss? Dickie was as near drunk as he could be last night. If he had called me Olive—he always does, you know—if he had kissed me, would you have minded?"

"You know why I should not. We expect you to marry Mr. Blake, and Mr. Blake expects you to."

"But why? What is Dickie? What has he ever done? What will he ever do but play golf and polo, and drink cocktails and get fat and have softening of the brain?"

"He is your own kind, and he has a fortune of over a million dollars!" warned the old lady.

"But what kind is our kind, Auntie? What do we do except seek some further excitement, some new experience? We are always going the limit. That's the way we live and fight ennui. Don't you see how natural it is for me to want something different—like John Arms, who is so strange to me that I cannot even imagine what he is really like? And what is there new in marrying a million dollars? You never really marry the man that's got the million. Money makes our kind free—too free."

"These high ideals are not like you, Olive."

"I know it. Borrowed them from John!" she laughed.

"Are you seriously contemplating marriage with this adventurer?" demanded Mrs. Thurston.

"Well, *he's* contemplating it seriously," Olive confessed, flushing. "But don't call him an adventurer, dear. An adventurer has imagination, enterprise. John hasn't got a bit. I'm not sure but I suspect him of being dull, and of attending divine worship on Sunday. An adventurer is the masculine of *me*—selfish, designing, irresponsible, ex-

travagant. John is wilful, not selfish, determined, not designing, and thrifty. Do you know, he took me to a moving picture show yesterday, five cents a ticket!" She laughed. She shrieked and clapped her hands in a perfect gale of merriment.

"Olive, I entreat you to be sensible," moaned the old lady tearfully. "You will regret it to the longest day you live if you do not give up this madness."

"I know I shall, Auntie. And after it's over, I can't sue him the way we do for alimony. He hasn't got anything but a widowed mother and an old house in Valhalla. I'm doing my best not to do it, but at the same time I know I'm trying with all my might to win him," she answered with sudden soberness.

"You are crazy! That man has hypnotised you!"

"No, it's myself, the way I've lived, always craving, craving something different."

"Do you, can you possibly think you are in love with him?" cried the other, wringing her hands in genuine distress.

"That's it: I don't know," said the girl, looking at her queerly, as if she contemplated a mystery. "What do we know about love, the women of our kind? It is an adventure, isn't it—like the rest?"

We try it out, and cast it from us for the next one, don't we?"

"Any one would think you had no morals to hear you."

"Well, I'm not sure that I have. But, Auntie, wouldn't it be splendid to—to develop a character, a real character of your own, not like just your kind—and gingham morals?"

"Gingham morals!" gasped Mrs. Thurston.

"Yes, you see we would be poor."

"But you are not poor. You have a fortune of your own."

"That's one funny feature of the situation. He says we shall live on what he earns. Think of it!—like camping and doing your own work!"

"You've never camped longer than three weeks, and you couldn't stand it six months."

"I know it. And naturally I do not take him too seriously about that. I should of course be able always to have what I want."

"You've actually been thinking about marrying him, Olive. Every word you say reveals that. I never could have imagined your folly going as far as that."

"I didn't sleep a wink last night thinking of just that," the girl said, smiling helplessly.

"It's preposterous!"

"Yes," sighed the culprit.

"I'm glad you admit it, and I shall exercise my authority to save you from further scandal. Your Uncle Richard is your guardian. He placed you in my care. I positively forbid your seeing or communicating with that man again!" she said, rising stiffly.

Olive sat looking at her a moment, very pale. Then her eyes suffused with tears. She flitted over, buried her face in the pillow, and began to weep hysterically.

"There, my dear, of course you are a bit ashamed. But everything is all right. Girls do such foolish things sometimes," murmured Mrs. Thurston, highly gratified, as she bent and patted the black head.

"Don't cry. You will spoil your pretty eyes. I'll send Thompson up at once. Mr. Blake has been waiting all this time downstairs with the car. He's come for that drive we are to take out to the Shoals this morning."

"Oh, Auntie, please excuse me. I can't go, not to-day—I—I feel like a widow!" sobbed the girl.

"Bless the child! Very well; have your cry out. I shall tell him you have a headache. We will be back for lunch."

She went out.

Olive continued to weep with the happy abandon of youth until she heard the roar of Dickie Blake's car in the street below. Then she sat up, every curl on end, but with that sadly chastened look a woman always wears when she has been obliged to give up her ghost.

She seized the 'phone from the table.

"Central, give me Ivy, one, three, four, six," she said, holding the receiver to her ear.

"Is it you?" she almost whispered, winking hard against her tears.

Evidently it was.

"John, I can't!" she sobbed.

"What? No, I'm not c—crying. I'm laughing. It's all been—so foolish."

"Do you mean Dickie? No, he isn't here. He's motoring with Aunt Sarah."

"I can't tell you over the 'phone."

"I mustn't. It's no use," she quavered.

"No, please don't come."

"See you where?"—brightening.

"Oh, yes! I will, just to say good-bye."

An hour later a tragically pale but beautiful young woman wearing a white tailored suit and carrying the latest thing in parasols walked rapidly along Peachtree Street. She was very calm, all things considered. This, in fact, was the reason for her calm. She had reached that conclusion every woman reaches just before she marries, that she cannot, will not, must not do it. Being young and comparatively inexperienced in this matter, she did not know that this was the negative state of the final affirmative. Her eyes were already fixed upon an automobile which stood beside the curb a block farther on. As she drew near, the door was flung open. She let down her parasol with a jerk and stepped in.

"No nice girl would do this," she whispered, as John Arms drew her down beside him.

"Listen, dear," she went on with quivering lips, "we can't do it. I should ruin your life. I'll have to marry Dickie Blake. I'm his kind, not yours. Dickie plays the races, and I've always played—

the men." She looked up at him as if suddenly she beat her wings against him, terrified. He held her in his arms, kissed her, would not release her.

"You can't trust me, oh, you can't trust me," she sobbed, dropping her head upon his breast.

"I know it; I'm only trusting myself," he answered with grave assurance. Then he leaned forward.

"Drive to Christ Church," he said, speaking to the chauffeur.

"To Christ Church!" she exclaimed, startled.

"Yes, we can't be married in a taxi, you know," he answered smiling, as he again pressed her to him.

"Oh, thank Heaven, I cannot escape from this man," she murmured with a sigh of surrender.

.
Thompson was upstairs packing her young lady's things. Her young lady had disgraced herself. Her trunks were to be expressed at once to the present seat of disgrace, a little unfashionable resort somewhere in North Georgia.

Mrs. Thurston was below stairs, prostrated upon the drawing-room sofa.

"I can't think what made her do it. She as

good as admitted to me only this morning that she did not care for him," she was saying to Mr. Blake.

"Sporting instinct; Olive is a gambler from her heart out. Risk anything," he answered.

He was really a very intelligent man of his kind, and just now he was feeling very much as he often felt when he staked too much money on the wrong horse.

"Person at the 'phone who says he's a representative of the press. Wishes to speak to Mrs. Thurston," announced the butler from the door.

"No, I'll go," said that lady, rising and waving a detaining hand at Blake, who made as if to spare her this disagreeable experience. Dickie was out of the running now, she reflected as she went out. The less he said, the sooner he disappeared altogether, the better.

Where a rich young man marries a chorus girl, it is one of those matrimonial "casualties" which society ignores until the rich young man reappears, minus the chorus girl. But where a rich young woman marries out of her own class, somewhere beneath her financially, that is a different matter,

seriously damaging, and the scandal must be covered up even if you gag on your own rage while you do it.

As Mrs. Thurston placed her ear to the receiver, she was too much agitated to be introspective, but she was nevertheless equal to the situation.

No, her niece had *not* married a chauffeur! Certainly not! She had married Captain John Arms, of the Valhalla Volunteers. Member of the celebrated Virginia Arms family. Yes, she admitted that the wedding had been quite unexpected, but the reporter was instructed not to say that in his paper. He was only to announce the marriage—and the groom's ancestry.

"I might have said he owned an iron foundry," she said regretfully as she returned to the drawing-room.

Meanwhile, Dickie had considerably made the wisest possible disposition of himself.

"I'm taking the night express to New York," he told her.

"Yes, it's very warm here. I don't blame you," said the old lady, with admirable poise.

"But I may run down later in the season," he added as he took his leave.

Dickie was a New York importation. So were the Thurstons, for that matter. Richard Thurston came to Atlanta with his wife and niece, who was also his ward, only a year since for business reasons. He was a cotton broker. Mr. Blake had followed as a matter of course, having nothing in the world to do at the time but to court Olive.

He was not overwhelmingly cast down at the dénouement of that affair. It was all in the game. But he thought with a cryptic smile as he ran down the steps to his car that he would come back, say in about three months. He would give Olive three months to get through with this adventure.

Your prophecies are always made for you by the one who rocked you in the cradle, or by some one who kissed you before you were married to some one else. They are your apocryphal scriptures, written for you in sighs or in spite. And, left to yourself, nine times out of ten you would come true to your apocrypha. But who is left to himself or to herself? You cannot work out your own damnation with that consistency planned for you, nor even your salvation. Somebody comes along and seizes you by the hand, and says, "You belong to me. My life shall

be your life. My God your God. My fate your fate!"

Farewell prophecies! Hail all contradictions! You are no longer just yourself. You are the mere accompaniment of some one else. Your whole life henceforth consists in erasing your own life, even when you struggle most to preserve it. You resolve that you will do thus, and you will not do so. And immediately you do not do thus, and you do do so. Ages which you thought were buried in the dust of centuries dark and deep bind you. Little hands as frail as the green tendrils of growing vines detain you with the strength of bonds. You are dissolved by the forces about you. You exist only to impart life, not to live yourself. This is the ultimate fate of every man and every woman. Courts cannot give freedom, wealth cannot buy it. We are in bondage to the inevitable. And the inevitable is the awful God of destiny withstanding us in the face of this husband or this wife, in these conditions which we cannot change, in every day and every night of all the years. It sounds terrible, and it is terrible, but in it consists the only safety. No man is fit to be the captain of his own soul. And no woman can be the right keeper of her own heart.

The one belongs to God, and the other belongs to man. When women have their wish of equal rights, when children are born of health, and not disease, when Capital is Labour, and Labour is Capital, when we have accomplished all reforms even to the last one of living in love and charity, the same inequalities will still exist between man and man, and between men and women. We can do nothing altogether of ourselves, but always handicapped and strengthened and finally destroyed by that other one who seized us long ago in the narrow bridal path of the great illusion, love, which is the only true prophet, because it is the one everlasting illusion.

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It was six o'clock in the afternoon one week later.

Valhalla faced the setting sun, gray gables among the green trees, open verandas like countenances very old and kind showing above the frowsy syringa and lilac bushes. The high, thin chords of the "Maiden's Prayer" played upon an ancient piano floated plaintively from some parlour window on the Avenue—hoopskirt music in an old hoopskirt town. Sparrows chirruped in the magnolia trees. A little whirlwind of dust and yellow leaves arose from

somewhere and came bobbing, whirling, down the street and suddenly dissolved like the airy spirit of nothingness, leaving the pavement before the Arms house spattered with dying leaves shining like fairy gold upon the ground.

One would have said that this place was a memory, a dream, an old faded picture in an old musty book, not a real place at all, and that nothing could happen there—just as something was about to happen.

The night express blew in the hills above the town.

Mrs. Arms came out upon the veranda. She wore a stiff black silk gown which spread out and rustled magnificently upon the floor behind, old lace in the sleeves and pinned above her breast with the miniature brooch. Her thin hair lay as smooth as two white wings folded upon her head. She wore that expression of repose which an old woman can always assume when she is agitated. She looked down the Avenue toward the station. That was the train! John and his bride would be coming presently. She hurried back into the house, moved from room to room inspecting everything, making sure that no chair had set one leg before the other while she was upstairs dressing. She suspected her chairs. She

had often observed that although every one might be in its place against the wall, when she returned some little old rickety mahogany rocker would be out of line, leaning back with its nose turned up. But upon this great day every leg toed the mark, every tidy hung stiff fringed as it should hang. She went into the dining-room. The table glistened; the silver tea service winked at her. No matter who the girl was that John had married, she had never seen handsomer silver nor thinner china, she reflected.

And she did not know whom he had married. His letter announcing the event was brief. No lover's enthusiasm about his bride. He had merely said that they were married, and when they should come home, and would she ask Colonel Ripley to meet them at the station with his car, which was, in fact, the only car in Valhalla, except one other, which, for reasons, was barred from society.

She thought, she hoped, John could be trusted in this matter of choosing a wife. He was a sensible man, not flighty. Still, her hands trembled as she went back to the veranda at the sound of wheels and of a motor softly purring, and of a high, young voice keen and sweet as the notes of a flute.

The next moment a marvellous being flew up the walk between the box hedges and precipitated herself upon the old lady's breast.

"I'm John's wife, Mother; not the girl he should have married, just the one he did marry!"

Was she sobbing or was she laughing? The mother embraced her, and made this inquiry of John, who replied with smiling eyes that it did not matter which his wife was doing, she did both with equal effect.

As it turned out, Olive was doing both. When she lifted her face from Mrs. Arms's shoulder, her eyes were full of tears, and her lips were sweetened with the most adorable smile. She stared at the old lady as one contemplates an old and beautiful masterpiece, while Mrs. Arms looked again at her son, as much as to say, "What does this mean, John? You are a hawk and you have married a bird of Paradise."

For Olive was lovely beyond any creature she had ever seen, enhanced by the fine art which gathers beauties to beauty, perfumed with a fragrance as of all flowers, slender, dark, richly flushed, perfect with that perfection which makes one wonder what it is good for.

John kissed his mother for an answer, and the beginning was begun, but the end was nowhere in sight, though each of the three must have wondered what it would be.

The "infare" which followed—wedding suppers were always called "infares" in Valhalla—was an event which promised to be as solemn as a funeral. John and his bride sat together at one end of the long table. Mrs. Arms commanded the other. On either side were the men and women whom John's wife would be permitted to know, according to the usage of the best manners and customs of that place.

Olive wore a white gown, very simple, she thought. It was really the most amazing garment ever seen in Valhalla. Cut very low, bodice beaded with pearls, no sleeves at all, her head and shoulders rising out of it like a brilliant exotic flower. She was very gay, talking to every one without looking at any one. Meanwhile, every eye was fixed upon her except those of her husband. The women stared with prim reserve, the men with open admiration.

Colonel Ripley arose to propose a toast to the bride. He was a wizened, gray old veteran with one

leg two inches shorter than the other, owing to that same circumstance of being a veteran.

He stood one-sided like an old bent sword, holding his glass high.

"We drink, John, to your wife," he began. "Some women are like flowers, very pale and fair; some are like fruit, very fine and sweet. Some are lean and some are fat (from whom, God, deliver us); but here's to the fairest flower, the finest bunch of grapes, the most beautiful bride ever seen in Valhalla."

Every old, plump, withered wife at the table let down the curtain of her face. They had all been fair brides once upon a time.

"May you have many returns of this happy day," the Colonel went on, bowing to Olive, who clasped her husband's hand beneath the table; "and may all your troubles be little ones, my dear," he concluded shamelessly, as Olive gasped and dropped John's hand. An old man at a wedding often is guilty of a kind of irreverence to the bride.

They clinked glasses and drank the toast awkwardly. The women as if it were a bitter medicine;

the men bobbing their bald heads at Olive as if they tasted her in the glass.

"I drink to my mother," said John, rising, "to the wives and mothers of Valhalla. May my wife grow like them is the dearest wish of my heart," he concluded, bowing to Mrs. Arms.

Olive swept both sides of the table with her bright glance and resolved, so help her life and all cosmetics, art and clothes, that she would never "grow like" these five frowsy, lethargic wives who, however serviceable and good, had no charm and no grace in their years. She wondered as she looked at her husband if he really meant it, or if he was merely providing a compliment with which to cover and excuse their stupidity.

They filed out of the dining-room, the women still silent, the men talking loudly, doing their masculine best to differentiate the occasion from a funeral. But you never can do that at a wedding except in well-trained society. The women will not be gay, not if they are old and experienced in the marriage relation. The freshness, youth, and happiness of the bride remind them of something long past, like another life out of which they died years and years

ago when their children were born, and they gave up their ghosts to become the bond servants of the next generation.

This was the trouble when Colonel Ripley suddenly discovered that his wife was not present. She had disappeared like a voluminous old lady thunderhead the moment they entered the parlour. He always missed her when she was not with him, and he never was aware of her when she was beside him. He hastened to find her.

Mrs. Ripley sat in the deepest darkness of the veranda with her handkerchief pressed to her eyes. Her feelings stuck out in a kind of bristling wifely indignation at the Colonel, who was always wounding them.

“What on earth is the matter, Mother?” he exclaimed, skipping up to her.

“I’m not a ‘flower’ nor a ‘fruit’! I’m old and fat, Mr. Ripley,” she sniffled; “but I can remember the time when you thought I was the fairest bride. Still, I never showed my person to the public as John Arms’s ‘bunch of grapes’ is d—dangling herself before all eyes.”

“Bless my soul, Mother, you are the harvest of all things to me, and you are not fat. I never thought of such a thing!” exclaimed the lying, gallant old husband, endeavouring to embrace his sheaf of all things.

“You felt it, which is worse! And right now you are in love with her, every one of you are,” she sniffed. Which was the truth. The five old wives knew it, though their husbands were far from suspecting their own romantic defection. The best man is an unconscious vandal where a pretty woman is concerned.

While all this was going forward, Olive had at last fixed her attention upon some one. This was a girl who sat on the left of Mrs. Arms at the table. She was no longer young, but she had that unmistakable starved maiden stare which often defines the unmarried woman far gone in her twenties. Never once did she look straight into the face of John’s wife, even when she greeted her so becomingly, nor afterward when they exchanged some words which neither remembered nor meant, they were so absorbed in guessing about something else.

A bridegroom is always the author of the **bride**.

And the handsomer she is, the more engaging, the more does he feel justified in remaining in the background. This is why brides are so prominent immediately after the wedding. She is his trophy, the intimate victory of love. As a trophy Olive was a stunning success. She showed all those indications brides show of not yet belonging entirely to her husband, of having been won but not conquered. She was the gay spirit of the evening. She flirted quite naturally with the men. With equal ease she almost ignored the gentle old wives, even when she floated from one to another declaring with sweet animation that she "adored" everything, and Valhalla was a "dream of a place," and didn't they think so? They did not, but they did not know how to say so. They merely said that she would soon get acquainted, and they hoped she would not be "too lonely," and that she would be happy, "hoping" being the one term brides cling to until they fold it away with their wedding garments.

When the guests were gone and Olive was alone with her husband in their chamber, she inspected him, she stared at him through the mirror as he stood before the window. Then she went to him,

slipped her arm in his, rubbed her head feline fashion against his shoulder, and said:

“John, who was that girl?”

“What girl?” he asked innocently.

“You know; the only one, who sat beside your mother at the table,” she accused, smiling up into his stare.

“Oh, that was Anna Berry.”

“Why didn’t you marry *her*?”

“What a question! Didn’t want to; never thought of it. Why?”

“She’s in love with you.”

“Nonsense!”

“Yes, and she’d have made you exactly the kind of wife you want me to be—like the others here to-night,” she sighed, permitting herself to be folded in his arms.

“Didn’t you like them?” he said, kissing her.

“Yes”—faintly—“but how can their husbands love them, I wonder. Do you really want me to be like them?”

“Not yet,” he admitted, smiling down at her with candid desire.

“They—John, they reminded me of fat old prov-

erbs. Isn't there some mention of them in the Bible—the woman who praiseth her husband within the gates? I never saw them before; to-night they were all here; and their husbands didn't praise them at all—only you, who have not got a proverb for a wife," she ended with a giggle which was a half sob.

Then her thoughts went back to Anna.

"But that girl, John, she didn't look even as cheerful as a proverb; like one of the sadder psalms. Did you notice her mouth?"

"No, certainly not!"—as if he would clear himself of this scandal at once.

"Oh, you must have; her lips were pale, so bravely sweet, John, as if she would have opened them only to say 'Selah' if you burned her at the stake."

"Olive, are you unhappy?" demanded her husband, getting to the root of the matter at once.

"No; but John, I love you like a transgressor. I couldn't cry 'Selah' if you burned me at the stake, and I don't want to live just to praise you within the gates!"

"It's the way the best women have of praising

themselves," he returned, with that grave masculine conceit which is characteristic even of the bridegroom.

"Thank Heaven, I'm modest!" she laughed, placing her hands against his breast and swinging back in his arms. "I don't want to be a 'best woman.' I want to be loved because I am myself, not a scriptural reminder of sorrow and all the virtues."

"But do you want that?" he asked gravely, searching her as a man looks for a secret in a woman's eyes.

"Oh, I do! If you don't love me more than I can possibly love you, dear, I don't know what will h—happen," she said, flinging herself upon his breast.

She was, in fact, a little thankful since seeing Anna. Her husband was less merely a mystery to her, more her own man, to have and to hold against all others. What else, she asked herself, did this uneasiness, this ache somewhere in her mean?

No wife ever settles herself in her husband's arms with the passionate determination to stay there till death parts them until she finds this other woman whom he might, could, would, or should have loved.

The first thing every bride does is to search for her until she discovers her. And she is not contented until she does. After that the only difference is that she knows the name, the features, the dress, and character of her discontent. And the back of her hand is to that woman, even if for reasons of strategy she adopts her for her dearest friend. The victim she chooses for this rôle may be innocent. She may be the last person in the world who could attract her husband. That has nothing to do with the case. She must exist in the mind of the wife, either potentially or really, as surely as the marriage ring encircles her finger. She is the postscript of the wedding ceremony which serves to clench the bands, and she is strictly a feminine illusion, this other woman. Many a man has lived and died, and married twice without ever feeling a pang of jealousy for his wife. Your good wife never inspires that. But however faithful her husband is, the wife does not live who has not felt the pangs of jealousy, even if she is only jealous of the beautiful girl she was when he fell in love with her.

Jealousy is no part of love. It is simply the raw seam of that relation which irritates love.

Olive had found this enemy sought and feared by every wife in the person of Anna Berry. And that which was far more significant than she could imagine was that she herself became almost at once this enemy of every wife in Valhalla who laid eyes upon her opulent beauty and candid charm.

If she had known, she would have been amused, not offended. She knew how far she could be innocent, and exactly how guilty she had a right to be. If at this time she had resolved her sense of acquisitive femininity into a creed, it would have read something like this: "I am for all men to love a little, and I myself will love only one if I can."

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When a young man marries he knows he has done something right and he is proud of it; but when an old bachelor marries he knows he has done something queer and he is anxious about it.

John Arms was more than anxious. He was in the state of a man who has invaded a foreign country, seized a valuable hostage, and is now determined to make her a native of his own country. This is not an easy thing to do even when the victim is willing to be naturalised. But it is especially hard

where the difference is not in nationality, but a difference in social caste. You may live five blocks further down-town and belong to a civilisation as different as if it were six thousand miles away across the sea. The great divider in this world is not morals nor manners, nor culture, nor the lack of culture. All these things may be acquired or abandoned as the case demands. But it is money. Poverty may separate a man from the world to which he belongs by right or birth, education and attainments. Wealth is often the only thing which keeps a man out of the gutter and slums where he belongs. It begets an arrogant consciousness of superiority where no superiority really exists. It affords a fool a sense of assurance which nothing that he is or can do justifies. It enables him to despise and abhor other people who are better than he is, because they wear dingy clothes, do dingy things, practise contemptible economies. They offend his delicacy. For that is one thing wealth inspires in the most degradingly indulgent people, a neurasthenic abomination for the odour of grime, sweat, and honest labour. They are as clean outside as the other man is inside. And God himself can-

not teach them the significant difference in these two conditions.

John had married a rich girl and he was himself almost wretchedly poor. He had no compunctions about that. He believed with a sort of elemental dignity that if a man was poor, endured hardships, his wife was no better than he was. She must endure the same condition and accept the same hardships. He was not one of those men who long to give their wives "everything," surround her with luxuries and keep her in idleness, and who serve life sentences to hard labour, practise ignoble methods to win wealth, all to this end. In his dull way he believed this was wrong, immoral. That if a man worked, his wife should also work; if he economised, she should be thrifty. In his opinion there was nothing tragic, nothing to regret, in having taken Olive from an existence based upon false standards of wealth and indulgence. He was not responsible for the fact that she had started life wrong. She would now begin it right. He had this understanding with her before their marriage. She was not to spend her own money. She must live within his means, adjust herself to the simplicities

and necessary economies of their station in life. It would not be difficult, he told her. Every one in Valhalla was poor. She had agreed. It was true she looked at him a little vaguely, but most adorably submissive.

"Yes," she had said, tucking one of her pretty, delicate hands beneath his big, hard palms. He felt it tremble, like the wing of a bird, "and it will be lovely living like that, something new."

"No," he interrupted, "something old, as old as man, and right."

"Yes, like beginning in the first garden—with—just a few things," she giggled shamelessly, at which he smiled in spite of himself, though he felt, somehow, that she was missing the point.

"Olive, my beloved, it will not be like that."

"No?" crooningly, as if it didn't really matter.

"It will be *hard*; work, you know, self-denial, no fine things, no pleasures except the simplest, no companionship except with the simplest God-fearing people——"

"Women who do not curl their hair, and who say their prayers, and who believe it's wrong to play cards, and who think they love their neighbour as

themselves; yes, I know," she recited, thrusting her other hand beneath his, as if she conceded that wing also.

"You do understand?" he insisted, looking at her doubtfully.

"Yes. And do they stand behind their husband's chair when they have their pictures made? I'd love that, John!"

"Well, it's not as bad as that, but far more strenuous. And it's for keeps, Olive. I shall never be a rich man," he answered solemnly.

"And when I come into my fortune—I'm not of age yet, you know—I'll give it to—— What'll I do with it, dear?" she asked, as if she referred to an extra garment which she would not need this trip.

"You'll want to spend it, my lady. That's what you will want to do, and that's when the trouble will begin, because as my wife you can't, not a dollar that I do not earn myself and give to you."

"I understand, and you are perfectly grand, John, and I'm in love with you! And you will give me street car fare—are there street cars in Valhalla?"

"No!"

"Then we can save that expense," she sighed thankfully.

At the time he thought, he was sure, she understood as nearly as she could without experience, and that she meant to abide by the agreement. But later, when he had more knowledge of his wife, he discovered that she got quickly through understanding his point of view upon any matter, was radiantly interested until she did, then she returned to her own mind, her own conviction on that subject, whatever it was, with a sort of directness which left nothing else to be said.

She remained elusive, either consciously or unconsciously beyond his reach. He loved her dearly, and was afraid to show how dearly. He was no sooner aware of this than he was also aware of the fact that she had divined it, and that she was far from resenting the situation. He could not escape from the impression that he was something she had acquired that lived, moved, and had a being, which was delightful in the nature of a toy. He resented this feeling, being a man, and not accustomed as so many women are to the toy-consciousness of relationship to their husbands.

"I've married my enemy all right," he said grimly to himself one day as he blustered among the plows and trace chains in the back of his store. "But I'll make her my wife."

At the same time Olive was pacing to and fro in the room upstairs, primping it with her own things, giving it an air, preparing to seduce John with pretty touches of colour and charm, little luxuries and conveniences on his old "high boy" and upon her own old-fashioned dressing table.

So long as there was something to conquer in John, there was something absorbing in her line to do which would keep her mind off the main issue. The main issue—she had recognised it by this time—was that Valhalla was not her world; these drowsy village folk with their scriptures and their prejudices were not her people. These days, so placid, so uneventful, so utterly empty of all excitements, dances, dinners, balls, and card parties were not her kind of days; and these nights were not her nights, when John returned to her, tired, silent, but ever with that brooding question in his eye, as much as to say:

“Well, is the struggle on? Not yet? Good! Kiss me!”

Whereupon she did kiss him, and she was enchantingly sweet with that beam in her eye which always answered his question, as much as to say, “That, Mr. John, is in the next act. This one is so interesting, and you are so funny and helpless, dear, we will go on with these lines, please.”

He resented this attitude and he could not change it. He was not so much her husband yet as he was a wager it seemed that she had made to raise the wind.

These soft autumn evenings were not the usual change of season. They were simply a stage setting filched by Olive from the elements for a certain drama. He could not doubt, however, that she liked it, was enraptured with it, with him, and with everybody she needed in it.

We are all actors, some good, some bad. We recite our lines as if we wrote them ourselves from the fullness of life, instead of having inherited them, or had them put in our mouths by the times in which we live, or by the emergency of the present moment. Or, we stumble upon the boards too soon or too late,

get in our little speech while the audience is cheering some one else, miss our cue, sneak back into the wings without having been noticed, although we have just given our lives in a good cause. It all depends, I say, upon whether we have the histrionic gift for living, whether we are good actors or bad. Olive was a good one. She was born to star a rôle, any rôle she chose. She literally lived it, that part. The only question was whether she could or would keep on living in it.

Apparently she had no thought of changing now. On the contrary, she was developing with startling genius all the possibilities this drama suggested.

"I just love this house, John," she said one day. "It's so quaint, so faintly, sweetly fragrant of the souls of women, of all the sad things they make and cherish in their loneliness."

"These tidies," she went on, turning in her chair and running her fingers through the fringe, "they are eloquent of the life your mother has lived. So industrious all the long, silent evenings for so many, many years with just her needle and thread. What was she thinking? Women do think, you know, when they sit like that."

John looked at her, startled. This divination concerning his mother was almost uncanny.

"You didn't talk with her, did you, dear?"

"No, not much. We are not a loquacious family," he admitted uneasily.

"And you don't talk much to your wife, either, do you, John?"

"What is there to say?"

"That's it; nothing at all. No news, no gossip, no different plans for to-morrow or next year. I have to invent things to say. It's delightful. And everybody is so dear and dead, except you, John. You are very much alive, only you don't know how to prove that," she concluded, laughing and pretending that she was fearful of the liberty she took of kissing him, which was exceedingly grateful to his vanity.

One evening when they walked through the town, which brooded silent and still in the twilight, she quite unwittingly gave herself away.

"It is beautiful," she said, looking about her, "this place where the trees drop their leaves like fairy gold, and the flowers almost speak to you, and the people come and go like men and women in

legends. I shall always remember Valhalla as the loveliest ballad in the world."

"Remember?" he repeated quickly, glancing down at her.

"Well, I mean, I think of it that way," she answered, confused.

"When you live in a place for years you do not remember it, you do not even think much about it, you become part of it."

"Yes, I suppose so," she replied faintly, as if he had suddenly caught her by the wings and revealed to her what she did not know was in her mind.

"But, please kiss me, John, when we get back to the house," she added after a pause. "I feel much the need of being kissed."

"Very well, we will turn back now," he agreed, wondering at her resiliency, her ability to return fresh and wilfully sweet to the one thing they had in common, their love.

A woman may be excited, very much frightened, without knowing that she is. Olive was in this state before the honeymoon month of her marriage ended in blustery October weather. She would not permit herself to think of the future. At the

same time she was subconsciously arranging that, fold beneath fold of her myriad mind. She was reproducing John in a person he would never have recognised. He was not so lacking, however, in telepathy that he did not instinctively feel this new presence of himself in Olive's thoughts. She had a card up her sleeve. He knew that. And she concealed it with more than her sleeve, with blandishments of every charm she possessed. That is to say, he was sure of her, and he was not sure of her. This is the experience of the most fortunate lovers, but not of many husbands. He admitted the enchantment, but, good Lord! would she never let him put his feet upon the ground? This was precisely the point. She would not, for in her opinion it meant putting them upon the neck of her spirit. He had everything else, and her allowance was lying idle in the bank. She would keep something.

Meanwhile she passed the time as best she could. She did not know how to do any useful thing, but she endeavoured to learn with an energy which was distracting to her victims. The furniture in the parlour lost its head under her directions. That staid old room took on an air of garish publicity.

Flowers glowed upon the marble top centre table where the family Bible had rested since John could remember beside a walnut-framed, glass-eyed telescope and a tray filled with pictures of famous places.

The Bible was stowed on top of the piano with its gilt-lettered back to the scandal. The piano, closed these many years, was wide open. It had apparently lost three front teeth owing to the absence of ivory on these keys. Now with its cover reared back it seemed to grin at some joke. The chairs jollied each other leg to leg in circles, as if company had just left, much company of the lively, companionable kind. Mrs. Arms put on her glasses now when she went into the parlour lest she should stumble over the sofa, which had been moved from the wall facing the fireplace.

She was devoted to her daughter-in-law. Olive brought life into the house. Never before had Mrs. Arms been associated with a young being who, upon the slightest pretext, or even with none at all, would precipitate herself upon this aged breast and insist upon being embraced in a perfect ecstasy of something which resembled hysteria, or happiness, she

did not know which. Sometimes the girl would laugh merrily at nothing and kiss her on each cheek. Sometimes the old lady thought she saw tears in her eyes. But she could not see well. Besides, the child's eyes were naturally so bright. If she could ever have made sure of those tears, she would have mentioned the circumstance to John. John, she thought, did not know what a treasure his wife was. Men were like that when they made a good marriage; took it for granted. Olive would make a splendid housekeeper, too, if she could ever teach her anything—whereupon she would sigh at her own limitations in this line. For she could not teach her. She knew this was her fault, because Olive was so bright, so eager to learn. She tried her with everything, from making bread to simple darning. And Olive learned everything quickly, with adorable animation, like a little girl playing dolls. But she never did anything right afterward. One might suspect this was perversity, the mistakes she made, but for the ardour and earnestness with which she accomplished these errors.

One morning shortly after breakfast they both saw John limping painfully up the Avenue.

"What is the matter, dear?" cried Olive, meeting him at the door and assisting him as he hobbled upstairs.

"I don't know," he groaned; "frightful pain in my heel, can't lean my weight on that foot."

"Don't tell me you have rheumatism!" exclaimed Mrs. Arms.

"It's the very mischief, whatever it is," he said, making a face as he took off the shoe, then the sock.

Immediate relief. He held up the sock, looked at it, felt of it suspiciously.

"Oh! I remember now," said Olive, with a gasp. She snatched the sock from him and fell back, laughing hysterically. "I forgot and left the needle in the—the darn!" she explained, replying to their astonished stare.

"Really, I'm sorry, John, and I'll never do it again!" she pleaded, still laughing.

These little things happen to the newly married, but usually if the wife is the culprit, she is filled with remorse, she is dissolved in tears. It was not the needle which stung John most deeply, it was this unfeeling mirth. There was something cryptic about that.

Mrs. John did not confine her activities to the home circle.

Colonel Ripley had insisted upon her being elected sponsor to the Valhalla Volunteers. She was pleased. So were the Volunteers. She went twice a week to the baseball park, the only place of amusement in the town, and sat on the bleachers with the rag-tag audience to watch the company drill. And she was always accompanied by Anna Berry, who looked as if she had been dragged there—which was near the truth. Olive would have her. She attached herself with a “we-have-something-in-common” air which Anna could not resist.

They, that is, Olive, were invariably surrounded by the Volunteers after the drill. Drolly awkward khaki-clad men of all ages and conditions who said little but stared much at this beautiful vivacious lady who had dropped among them like a flaming tropical bird. Anna was in the ring, but out of the running.

When John suggested that she ought not to go except when he could leave the store and come too, she said:

"I do it for Anna's sake, dear; she is such a dear, dim little thing. I'm bringing her out. She needs the diversion. She has so few, you know."

He said no more, but he lost custom after that by closing the store earlier on these days and attending the drills.

"Olive," said Mrs. Arms, one fatal day, "The Placid Hours meet with Mrs. Ripley this afternoon."

"The Placid Hours, Mother?" interrupted the girl.

"Yes, it's a club we've had for years, composed of some ladies who are interested in music, art, literature, you know."

"Yes," answered Olive with suspicious primness.

"And you've been asked to help with the entertainment. It's quite a compliment."

"What can I do, Mother?"

"Recite, or sing something. You do sing, don't you?"

"Yes—a little," she answered demurely.

"Then do that, it's the very thing."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course, the ladies will be so pleased. We've just finished 'Taming the Shrew.' Anna Berry

gave a splendid paper on the Heroines of Shakespeare at our last meeting. We should like something a little different now."

"Very well; if you insist I will," said Olive modestly.

Mrs. Arms was pleased when she came down dressed for the occasion. She wore such a simple little white frock, a trifle short, to be sure, but Olive's feet were so neat, and the skirt was very full. Her hat was a plain, broad-trimmed Leghorn with one rose merely clinging to it, as if attracted by the rose face beneath.

"You look like a girl of the '60's, my dear. They were pretty girls, I can assure you," she said, with the pride of an old lady who is suddenly reminded of her own youthful beauty.

The Placid Hours sat like old round-faced clocks ticking with their knitting needles, talking between the "papers" which were read. Then they moved up, so to speak. They were all attention.

"We are very glad to welcome Mrs. John Arms among us. I have the pleasure to announce that she will now favour us with a song," said Mrs. Ripley by way of introduction.

"Favour us" was a favourite expression in Valhalla. You always "favoured" the company when you recited "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night," or when you read a selection from "Lalla Rookh."

Olive rose and went toward the piano, which was opened for her. But she did not sit down. She stood before it, stole a glance at Mrs. Arms, who was endeavouring not to look the pride she felt in being so nearly related to this lovely creature.

Olive opened her lips and began to sing. No one understood. The words were French. So were the gestures that accompanied them.

She spread her arms before her, primped up her eyes; looked away, apparently she was telling something very intimate about herself. She touched her breast airily with one flying finger. She pointed significantly at first one foot then the other, lifting them with marvellous agility as she did so. Then she abandoned herself to the expression of this emotion, whatever it was. As she sang she began to dance, at first very timidly, making little plaintive sounds by way of accompaniment. At last she whirled into a perfect frenzy of motion, the song changing accordingly, becoming violent, insistent.

She spun upon one toe while she elevated the other at right angles to her person.

The Placid Hours flattened themselves against the wall, their eyes bulged, their mouths fell open. Not one of them had ever seen a ballet, but they had "heard of such things."

"My dear," said Mrs. Ripley to Mrs. Evelina Bray, who had not been present, "she made no attempt to keep her skirts down. Every minute we expected to see something, but we never did. I don't know how she managed it, the brazen thing!"

"I feel so sorry for John's mother. Such a lady as she is, and always has been," said Mrs. Bray.

"Well, *I'm* sorry for John Arms. And I have been from the moment I laid my eyes on that girl. I told Mr. Ripley the night they came home, when we dined there, that she wouldn't *do*."

"Do you suppose he could have married a chorus girl?"

"They say not. Mr. Ripley knows her uncle, Richard Thurston, by reputation. They are very wealthy people. We've heard that John's wife has money."

"Well, she certainly has brass."

Several days passed before Mrs. Arms could trust herself to speak to Olive about what she had done, and of which she seemed artlessly innocent. At last she made up her mind to tell John. And she did, glossing the thing over. Still she thought perhaps he ought to speak to Olive, caution the child a little. People were so ready to misinterpret a thing like that. She had herself entirely recovered from the shock. Olive had not been properly reared, that was apparent. But she was a dear good girl.

John found his wife kneeling before the window in the parlour trying to coax a little yellow butterfly by trailing a spray of goldenrod before it.

"You see the poor thing has been born in the wrong place, and at the wrong time of the year. It must die!" she said, looking up at him.

"Olive, what was that thing you sang the other day at the Ripleys'?" he demanded, seating himself not too near, and coolly ignoring the fate of the butterfly.

"Oh, that! It was a little French song; you do it with a dance."

"So I hear," he said grimly.

"Well, what about it?"

“Just this: my wife does not sing that kind of song nor dance that kind of dance!” he said sternly.

Silence. The butterfly lifted itself on feeble wings, wavered and dropped upon Olive’s head, clung there like pale gold among the dark curls.

John brought himself to look at her. He knew that this was dangerous. Still he risked it, but with a severity of expression which Powhatan himself could scarcely have surpassed. She was very pale, and she stared at him with terrified eyes.

“Oh, John, don’t look at me like that,” she whispered.

“You knew it was wrong!”

“Afterward, yes. I’ve been so miserable, dear, every day since, expecting this.”

“Why did you do it?”

“I don’t know,” she sighed. “I felt desperate, as if I had to do something awful, move a mountain, or something. And I can’t budge you, John. Your name should be Peter, the Rock, dear. So I moved *The Placid Hours*.”

He continued to cover her with a look as cold as ice.

"I think," she went on, "it comes from being good so long. I'm not used to that. We are good a little, and then we do other things, not bad, but exciting, you know. Besides," she added, with a hysterical titter, "I wanted to stir them up, those old Placid Hour women, and I did. They will never forget it."

"No, they never will," he answered bitterly.

"Not if I'm very quiet and good all the rest of my life? I feel now that I can be. Please don't look at me like that!" she cried, covering her face. "I love to sing, John. I've done that and danced since I was little," she said from behind her hands. "And you've never asked me once to sing for you. Are you looking kinder now?"

He refused this information. She dropped her hands to see, and evidently felt some encouragement.

"Listen, dear; I'll sing something just for you," she cried, springing up and going to the piano.

She spread her fingers upon the yellow keys. They tinkled plaintively, like an old lady who remembers the tune but cannot quite make it:

“In days of old, when Knights were bold
And barons held their sway,
A warrior bold, with spurs of gold,
Sang merrily his lay . . .”

She looked at him over her shoulder, smiling as she went on, lifting her rich young voice until it filled the room with the splendour of all the memories of love and courage:

“My love is fair, my love hath golden hair
And eyes so blue, and heart so true,
That none with her compare.
So what care I if death be nigh;
I'll live for love or die.
I've fought for love, I've fought for love,
For love—for love, I die!”

“Olive, my heart,” he cried, lifting her, pressing her to his breast with fierce strength.

She felt his tears upon her cheek, looked up in wonder and triumph.

“The mountain is moved at last,” she thought to herself with a happy sigh.

“You love me, John?”

Undoubtedly he did, with deep trouble in his heart. Never once had he put this everlasting question to her.

They heard the soft frow-frow of skirts, the tap of two heels upon the floor. They sprung apart; Olive dropped back upon the stool; John affected to have been engaged all this time in folding his evening paper.

"I thought I heard you singing, Olive, my dear," said Mrs. Arms, coming into the room. She was probably the only woman in the world who could smile over her spectacles.

"Yes, Mother, I was soothing the savage breast. Music hath charms for that, you know," answered the girl gaily.

"I'm glad you know the old songs," said Mrs. Arms, and wished she had made better use of that knowledge on a previous occasion. "I haven't heard 'In the Days of Old' since I was a girl," she went on. "We used to sing it. You don't have such songs now. I don't know what has become of the old music. It was so sweet."

"*You* are it, Mother. And John is the chorus. He repeats himself like that, over and over. But," she added plaintively, "what is one to do if one can't sing it, nor live it, this ballad life of the past?"

For days after this the Arms household enjoyed that kind of peace which comes from being easy for the moment, but expecting any moment that a certain anguish would begin again. Olive was making a home reputation for being the source of all happiness and the prognostication of much unhappiness. She was always amiable, with that dangerous sweetness which one feels cannot last. "Always" was a term which did not belong to her, which never defined her. She skipped from one mood to another as if presently she would have tried them all out. And then—Heaven help us all! And doubtless the devil would claim his own—the devil was a very real person in Valhalla.

One night the three sat at the supper table. Olive was glowing. She had been to watch the drill as usual. She thought Colonel Ripley was "such a funny old dear."

"He always comes to greet me, throwing that game leg high in the air, as if he meant to shake hands with his foot!" she said.

"That's the way he does, exactly," said John, laughing.

"By the way, I saw somebody there this afternoon," Olive added presently.

"A lot of us were there," put in John.

"Yes; but she was different, like the italicised word in the sentence."

Mrs. Arms primed her mouth and exchanged a glance with her son, as if they had a guilty secret between them.

"You must have noticed her, John; the woman in the car who wore the red coat and moved herself like the banner of your company. Very handsome, very enthusiastic over the Volunteers."

John refused to admit that he had noticed such a person.

Olive looked from one to the other, at first curiously, then with twinkling mirth.

"You must be alluding to Mrs. Bigsby, my dear," said Mrs. Arms primly, after a pause.

"What about her? She looked familiar to me," insisted Olive.

"I don't know her, my dear; never met her. And John doesn't know her either," explained the old lady quickly.

"Oh!" exhaled Olive. She was gratified. She

had found the skeleton in Valhalla's closet. She had no idea such a pretty, iridescent skeleton could have been hidden there. Mrs. Bigsby was certainly iridescent. Later, upstairs in their room, she resumed the subject.

"John, who is Mrs. Bigsby? What is her relation to the situation?" she demanded.

"I'm not in Mrs. Bigsby's confidence," he answered coldly.

"Oh, you sharper than a serpent's tooth, good man, John, how you can bite when you wish to damn!" she laughed.

"Olive, you must never know that woman, nor speak to her, nor admit that you even see her!" he said, slowly and with emphasis.

"Is she as bad as that?"

"She is divorced."

"But, John dear——"

"We will say no more about her," he interrupted, leaving the sting of his wife's curiosity still smarting.

Two days later she hurried to meet him when he came home in the evening.

"Absolve me, John, quickly!" she cried, standing before him in the hall.

"What is it? What are you talking about?" he asked.

"I know her; I've met her; and I've spoken to her—Mrs. Bigsby!" she said rapidly.

"You have spoken to that woman—my wife!"

"How could I help it? I was in the drugstore. She came in, walked straight to me, said she was glad to meet me—how could I help that? I couldn't say, 'Avaunt, false woman! My husband says he's not in your confidence!' could I?"

"This is no joking matter, Olive," said John sternly.

"I knew it, dear; I feel like a Sadducee, contaminated, first time in my life, though I've known as many divorced women as any other kind!"

For the first time, also, her cheeks began to reddened angrily beneath her husband's gaze.

"You only said she was divorced," she exclaimed. "I may be divorced myself some day, and then you won't like it if nice people refuse to speak to me."

"Hush! You don't know what you are saying."

"Yes, I do!" she cried, but still trying to muster herself. "You are narrow, cruel in your judgments, less charitable than the people I have known."

A sort of ashen pallor spread over his face. She was frightened, and went on trying to defend herself.

"In Rome, John, you do as Rome does, because you can. There are a lot of things to choose from and still be enough like the Romans not to excite criticism. But here in this place there aren't! Nothing but the Ten Commandments to live by, and a few of the more damaging to happiness scriptures, written by prophets in their sour old age—and, well, I just can't measure up; I don't know how!" she sobbed, backing away from him.

"There's one thing every wife must learn," he began, following her.

"What's that?" stopping shortly.

"To obey her husband!" he answered slowly.

"And there's one thing every husband does learn!" she returned.

"What?"

"That she won't!" she cried, flaring. "Oh, I begin to think my name is spelled with a 'don't'! It's 'Don't, Olive, don't, don't,' from morning until night, until I've don'ted so much, there's noth-

ing left to do!" she sobbed, turning swiftly and flying upstairs.

If you want to start a woman going, just keep on trying to stop her. John had not got this far in the wisdom of that sex. He was still firmly fixed in the convictions of his own sex—which are somewhat drastic so far as women are concerned. He went into the parlour and sat down.

The curtain had fallen on the first act. Upstairs, Olive was arranging the scenes for the next; he knew that. The thing which irritated him most was that she had begun by placing him in the wrong. He was indignantly conscious of showing up in this unfair light to her, but he never doubted that he was right. And Olive, who lay weeping upon her bed upstairs, would have trembled if she could have known what a grip John was taking downstairs upon the curtain of that next act.



PART TWO

PART TWO

WHEN an engaged couple quarrel there is a remedy at hand. They look at each other, coldly disillusioned. He perceives for the first time that she has a mole in one of her eyebrows. Strange that he had never noticed this disfigurement before! She notices that he is slightly bow-legged. Why had she never realised how ridiculous he was! How could she ever have contemplated marrying a bench-legged man!

"It has all been a hideous mistake. I do not, never could, love you," she says, with conviction.

"I'm glad we found it out before it was too late," he replies, with evident relief.

She returns his ring and his letters, has a good cry, and there is an end of the matter—at least, until they "make up." Then the girl says contritely:

"It was so foolish to quarrel over such a little thing when we really love each other!"

"And we will never wound each other that way again, dear," he answers tenderly.

"Of course we shall disagree——" she begins.

"Naturally," he finishes; "but we can do that calmly and lovingly."

Beatific arrangement, sealed with kisses.

So they are married, with the confident expectation of living happily ever after, the experiences of all other married people to the contrary, notwithstanding.

It is like the vow to remain sober that a man makes with absolute confidence and sincerity after a particularly bad "spree." He cannot keep it. He will not even want to keep it, because he is a drunkard. Marriage does not change the nature of a man, nor of a woman. It only develops the same along the edges. Each will have his or her rights, though they may be the other's wrongs, though the heavens fall and love dies a murdered death.

This is why the first quarrel after marriage is such a tragic affair. They were not expecting it. Each had done his or her best for the first three long weeks to avoid this very thing—possibly they got through the fourth week, but this indicates more

coolness and wisdom than love usually imparts to its victims.

And the perfectly awful thing about it is that there is *no remedy*. The outraged young wife cannot return the marriage ring. The indignant husband cannot stalk from out her presence never to return. Law, society, have them both by the neck. She must go on being the wife of "this—this Brute," who has no regard for her feelings. He must go on cherishing this serpent in his bosom who is certainly not the woman he took her to be.

What on earth are they to do about it?

Only nature which precipitated this situation knows that they will live through it, and through many more like it, until they become callous to each other's limitations and perversities and learn to accept them as the bad weather of their common human heinousness.

Olive and John had just entered this danger zone of matrimony. They had quarrelled about Mrs. Bigsby.

John was downstairs talking to his mother as if nothing had happened; Olive was lying face downward upon her bed upstairs, weeping furiously.

She had a double grievance. She had married a stranger, a man whose standards and whose training according to those standards made him seem almost of a different species to her own.

This, she thought with renewed rage, would not be so bad if she could do anything with John, broaden his views, make him see a few things as she saw them, and *live* a little as if life were a jolly good thing and not a long sentence to righteousness, poverty, and duty. The worst of it was that he was equally determined to reduce her to his own standards. She was to have no life, no will of her own. She was to "obey" him.

"Oh!" she gasped, leaping from the bed and pacing the floor with clenched hands.

If you would see the emotional drama in its keenest manifestations, observe a woman alone with a grievance in her own room. No actress famed as a tragedian can equal, much less surpass, the dimmest, dumbest woman in such a state of upheaval, with only God and her own soul for an audience.

"He associates with all kinds of men; every man does. But he would choose my friends as if I were morally irresponsible!" she said, like a furious

Lady Macbeth working herself up to the point of murder.

"I *will* speak to Mrs. Bigsby. I will be seen with her, whatever that means—I'll, I'll lay my head on her bosom. I'll show John a thing or two. And let him do his worst. I wish he would do his worst. I'm so tired of this d-damn stagnation that I don't care what happens, so something happens!"

At this she stood with staring eyes and parted lips, the tears upon her cheeks. The vision she suddenly beheld, following when she showed John "a thing or two," and when he really began to do his worst, was so terrible that she flew back to the bed, flung herself upon it, and wept aloud. Being thus cast down, she was still the great tragedian.

"I will never speak to him again until he apologizes," she wailed, kicking the footboard and writhing in the anguished strength of that resolution.

"No, thanks, Mother, I will not be down to supper. I have an awful headache," she answered, when Mrs. Arms, who was in happy ignorance of the tragedy, came up and knocked at the door.

She remained alone with her sorrow. She wanted to get possession of her soul again in the quiet dark

room. Where had her soul been, anyhow, these four weeks, while she had been piping and dancing to John, doing everything he said do, and nothing that she wanted to do!

She did not really know that she had been expecting him to come up to her after supper until she heard him go out and slam the door after him.

“What does that mean?” she said, sitting up and listening. “He never goes out at night.”

She ran to the window, thinking he might look up at it. He always did when he went out if she was upstairs. But no. She could see him striding down the Avenue, looking very huge in the half darkness, with his hat pulled far forward over his eyes.

“As if he meant to make a night of it!” she could not help exclaiming, with an hysterical giggle.

She stood a long time before the window, a sadly, sweetly dishevelled figure, with the cold autumn moonlight streaming over her. She expected every minute to see him returning. Surely he would not be cruel enough to keep her in this suspense. He must realise by now how wicked and cruel it was to speak to her the way he had spoken about Mrs.

Bigsby—and about obeying. In polite circles wives did not obey their husbands; it was only among the lower classes that they obeyed.

At last she turned away with a sigh. One more illusion gone. She had been married only one month, and she knew already that her husband stayed out in the evenings. But where? There were no clubs, no saloons, no place where the men of his kind naturally would go.

She went to the dressing table, lighted a little old glass lamp which had a wreath of coloured flowers round the pot-bellied chimney, and sat down to look at herself.

If any woman is left alone with a mirror, no matter how old and faded she is, no matter how young and confident she should be by her fairness and beauty, she will seek a certain confirmation in that shining surface. The old woman will gaze sorrowfully at her image as if it were her naked soul, as if every wrinkle were a prayer she had said which had not been answered. And the young one will search for new possibilities of loveliness if she is happy, and with fearful anxiety for the first shadowy line of something awful if she is not happy.

Olive was "perfectly miserable." She expected to behold a countenance aged and pallid with grief.

It afforded her mournful satisfaction to discover a flush upon her cheeks as of angry roses blown in a storm. Her lashes were still wet, like dew upon thorns among roses. Her eyes were bright with bitter grief, her lips were fiercely sweet. Her hair hung in a black cloud, framing all this prettiness and sadness.

Beauty is shamelessly provident of itself. This is why the exceedingly pretty girl is so much more apparent than the modestly homely girl. The former will not be lovely just in the wings. She must and she will come forth, very demure, of course, but where she can be seen. Change the modelling of their features and the homely girl will do the same.

"If," thought Olive with a sigh, as she regarded her reflection in the mirror—"if I were in New York, now, I should be at the theatre in a box. Or I should be at a ball, dancing, with not nearly enough dances—and Dickie Blake would be making love to me. Dickie could make love. At least he knew that much!" Which was in the nature of a dark reflection

upon some one who shamefully neglected his opportunities.

She wondered vaguely if she regretted Dickie—no, not Dickie, but *life*, the splendour and excitement of all that world out of which she had dropped. Yes, “dropped” was the right word.

She thought of Mrs. Thurston. At least she did not regret Aunt Sarah. The contrast between that lady and John’s mother was overwhelming in the latter’s favour. She had written once to her aunt, an affectionate and enthusiastic letter. The reply, long delayed, had been as coldly reserved as if Mrs. Thurston had addressed it to the whole Arms family. It implied plainly that since Olive had chosen her bed, no doubt a skimpy, hard one, she must lie upon it. She could not understand how a girl brought up as she had been could bring herself to make such a useless sacrifice of her future. Still, she hoped she would be “happy.”

Uncle Richard would not return from abroad before the latter part of December. Olive supposed there would be another bad time then, when she would be reminded of all she had missed and undone for herself. She was glad she had written to him,

too, before—her lips quivered—before she discovered what kind of a man John was, and how hard everything was going to be; that is, until she could change everything—for on this point her mind never wavered for a moment.

But where was John? What could be keeping him so late? It was as if she were in prison. Nothing could deliver her from this room, from these sad thoughts, but John. Why didn't he come home?

She looked at her watch. It was nearly eleven o'clock. She went back to the window and looked out. Everybody asleep but the trees and the wind and the leaves, sad little ghosts of summer days whirling and flying past her window.

Meanwhile John was acting up to the nature of being a man first and a husband afterward, which is the manner of his kind.

He had gone back to the store to audit his books. Not that this was necessary, but he felt the need of doing something familiar and commonplace by way of getting a grip on the situation. When a man's wife offends him, he does not fall into the error of the emotional drama. He leaves that to her, and her to that, no matter how young and beautiful she is.

He did not need the mirror for this business. But if there had been a mirror above the old long-legged desk in the back of the store he might have been astonished at his reflection in it as he stood copying entries upon his larger ledger. The Indian was uppermost in him. The expression of habitual repose had deepened into a forbidding grimness. He was at least thinking in the terms of war paint.

At last, when he could do no more with the books, he slammed the covers, thrust his hands in his pockets, and began to walk up and down, kicking shovels and plow points out of the way as he went. He recalled the first visit Olive made there—and the last. For she had never repeated it. Shortly after their marriage she whisked in one day, and stood amazed upon the threshold. He had seen that queer, meaning stare upon her face before she saw him standing far back among the nail kegs and oil barrels. The next moment she looked about her, made no comment. She stood lightly poised in all that dinginess like a pretty bird concerned not to muss its feathers. At length, feeling his curious, inquisitive gaze, as if he were trying her out with these hard, ugly, useful things, she affected an interest.

"What on earth is that awful thing with grinning red teeth?" she exclaimed, backing away from it with a pretty pretence of terror.

"That's a harrow," he exclaimed.

"And these chains, are they for prisoners, dear?"

"No; for gears, for dragging logs," he answered, smiling.

"Chains are associated in my mind with dangers," she said, mincing and peering at the row of cheap stoves, at the clutter of irons and staves and axes lying against the wall.

Finally, upon one of the shelves filled with tin cans and crockery, she caught sight of a pale blue glass pitcher with a bunch of gilt grapes raised on the glass. It was finished with a pewter cover.

"Oh, John, what is that charming thing up there?"—smacking her hands together as if she cheered the one bright object in this mean, dark place.

"That's a syrup pitcher," he answered.

"Do give it to me," she laughed.

He climbed up the rolling ladder and brought it down.

"What use have you for such a thing?" he said.

"Oh, I don't want to use it; I want to keep it—as

—a souvenir. It's so funny, so splendidly, opulently cheap. It spells 'trade,' doesn't it?"

"Well, I've sold fifteen like it," he answered coolly.

"And you could sell a thousand, I suppose. Why don't you get everything with gilt on it?"

"Because gilt is expensive, and my customers are poor. That pitcher costs fifty cents."

"Oh, as much as that? Then you'll have to credit me, John, for I haven't got fifty cents," she laughed.

He saw that she was trembling; that there were tears in her eyes. Then he went back to the till, gathered up in one hand all the small change there, and gave it to her.

She blushed furiously, and kissed him. He did not know then why she blushed. He had given her every penny he had. But now, as he tramped back and forth, he knew. It was because he had, would always have, so little to give her.

He remembered that she was in a hurry to be gone and that she had never come again. Not until this night had he permitted himself to admit the reason for that. This store with its display of poor things for poor people was like a little mean stall

on some back street in the city—places one glanced at but never entered. And he, her husband, was the keeper of this stall.

If many of the women who vaunt themselves in jewels and silks, and whisk superbly from one diversion to another in their limousines, could see the way their husbands earn the money they spend, they would spend it nevertheless, but they would feel less pride in their hearts. After you make your fortune, you may have a magnificent office and a rosewood desk, but before you get it you may be one of the curb gang on Wall Street who yell bids to the fellow in the second-story window. Or you may be the foreman of a sweat shop—or even a peddler of umbrellas, long before you knew your wife and bought her with promises of jewels and fine raiment and the limousine.

John, however, did not go far with his reflections. He was a man whose imagination never carried him further in his business than his capital justified.

The problem he faced was Olive, and the fact that it was always the glitter which caught her eye, whether it was a fifty-cent syrup pitcher or a thirty-cent woman like Mrs. Bigsby. She had made a

joke of the pitcher, but she was evidently resolved to make an unforgiveable fact of Mrs. Bigsby.

He knew that she was ashamed of him in relation to his business, the narrow, cheap way he made his living and hers. He was obliged to admit that her attraction to Mrs. Bigsby grew out of her familiarity with that kind of woman, in a circle of society where Mrs. Bigsby would not be so outrageously offensive, because that kind of society was polluted and degraded by wealth, license, and inordinate self-indulgence. He was resolved to change all that in his wife. But how? That was the question. It is not so easy to make a woman over once she has been made at all; and it never occurred to him that he might make a few admirable changes in himself by way of solving the difficulty.

Some men are born to fight. They do not live, they will make no concessions until they win. They are like reservists behind the long battle line of life, concealed by the commonplace, their natures and their courage unsuspected until the crucial moment arrives. You may live with them and never know that they are waiting for this. They do not know

it themselves. But when the hour strikes they come forth armed and ordained to accomplish that thing, whether it is to take a city or lead revolutions, or merely to work righteousness when unrighteousness is the fashion.

John Arms belonged to this class. Once he set forth, he had to win, and he would or die. Never once did it occur to him that Olive was a dangerous wife for such a man; that she might possess a character equal in strength to his own, with different, more subtle agility for achieving her will. The only thing he knew was that he had married her, that he loved her, and that he would make her a good wife to him. After that he would do everything else, including a large business. He felt that when he had Olive off his mind and properly adjusted, he would put more energy in the hardware business and he would succeed at that because he had succeeded with himself. Olive was that part of himself which required discipline now. He did not think of her any other way.

He looked at his watch. Ten minutes after eleven. He turned down the lamp, watched the last blue flicker of the dying flame, went out, locked the door

after him—all done very deliberately, as if there were no reason in the world to hurry—and took his way home through the sleeping town.

He did not plan what he would do, nor what he would say to Olive. He simply knew that he was tired, that he was going to bed and to sleep. He knew so little of the candle-in-the-window spirit of a waiting woman that it did not occur to him that Olive might still be up. And he was moved as perhaps nothing else she ever did had moved him when he looked up from the street and saw her standing there, ghostly white in the moonlight, staring down at him with a wildly tragic Charlotte Corday expression through the black checks of the window panes. Bless her! Was the girl awake still! He hurried upstairs.

“John, oh, John, it’s been so terrible!” she cried, flinging herself upon his breast as he entered the room.

“What’s been terrible, my sweet?” he exclaimed, folding her in his arms and kissing the piteous lips upturned to his.

One might have inferred that he had not thought of her; one could not have believed to see him thus

that he had spent hours thinking of nothing else but planning what he would do with her.

"Oh, it's been awful," she murmured between kisses; "the suspense, not knowing where you were."

And no one could have believed that this trembling, tender woman could have spent hours planning rebellion against this man.

"I didn't even know, John, if you would *ever* come back to me!" she moaned.

"You dear little goose," he laughed; "I'd come back to you from the ends of the earth, from the depths of the sea. I'd walk upon coals of fire, I'd commit murder, stop at nothing which separated me from you."

She sighed, looked up at him for the moment shriven of every fond ambition. Contented merely to be loved and to know that she was so loved.

"You are my business in life now: don't you know that, Olive?" he added presently, lifting her face and gazing into her eyes with a gravity which she found disconcerting, for she said with a little gasp:

"Oh, not that, John! I don't want to be your business, please; but just your love in life."

"Can't be one without being the other," he answered, lifting her, possessing her with all his strength as he bore her across the room and laid her upon the bed, folding the covers over her with rough, dragging tenderness.

"There! You should have been asleep hours since."

She considered all this. It was not what she expected, what she had a right to expect; but it was very good just the same. She thought it was John's dumb, sweet way of apologising for the way he had behaved.

She should have been very thankful that she did not make the mistake of extorting the apology, even supposing she could have got it. The wife who does that learns to her sorrow that the one thing a man is longest in forgiving her is the apology he is forced to make.

Long afterward Olive heard an old and very wise wife who had lived in singular peace with a very difficult husband say:

"A woman should always be the first to ask forgiveness of her husband when there has been any trouble between them. If the fault is hers, she clears her skirts; if it is his, he knows it, and the fact

that she assumes the blame only adds to his sense of guilt, makes him work out his penitence slyly but surely. It is much better than demanding an apology which absolves him from the actual doing of penitence."

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Nothing had been settled by this first clash of arms between John and his wife; neither had yielded one jot or tittle to the other. The only thing made clear by the incident was obscured for both in the struggle which followed—that love may remain true to love in the hearts of a man and a woman who are enemies, who have not a single other interest to bind them together. This is really a phenomenon of married life which has not received the attention nor the confirmation it deserves.

During the days that followed Olive showed a decided change in the weather of her spirit. She was grave; not pensive, but reserved. She made herself as silent as John was. She no longer met him in the evenings with that prancing, provocative air so enlivening to the spirit of a tired man. No, she did not care to go to the drill as usual on

Wednesday afternoon. She was tired of that parrot business. Colonel Ripley was an old bore, that's what he was, cavorting round her like an old lame war horse. He made her sick, he and his Volunteers! Why didn't they do something different, if only it were a game of baseball!

She was also tired of going to church on Sunday. "Oh, how do you stand it year after year!" she exclaimed to Mrs. Arms one Sabbath morning. "The same hymns, the same sermon really, though he takes another text just to fool us and pretend it isn't. He always glorifies St. Paul, as if St. Paul were a near relative of his. He always shouts and shouts about the 'upright man,'—'blessed is the upright man'—I should think John would get tired of being exposed that way every Sunday to the envy of the congregation," she concluded, with a sidelong look at her husband, who was reading the *Christian Herald* and who refused to permit his attention to wander.

"Well, I'm not an upright man, thank goodness," she went on. "I'm just a woman. But does he ever say anything to us? Certainly not! We are those jades his cousin St. Paul commanded to wear

their heads covered, and to keep silent in the churches, and to submit—submit—mit—mit ourselves to our husbands.”

“Olive!” exclaimed Mrs. Arms, astonished at this Olive whom she had never seen before.

“It’s the truth, Mother. I wonder you don’t resent it, a gospel for men only.”

“My dear, the Bishop’s going to preach to-day. He’s a very eloquent man. You will enjoy hearing him,” coaxed the old lady.

“Very well; if you insist, I’ll go,” she conceded, implying that if any one else in that room made the point, she would not go.

“But if it’s a Bishop, I *know* he’ll preach about St. Paul. They always do, as if they were more like him, and therefore better qualified to tell you how far short the rest of us are.” She added this as she moved with lagging steps to get ready. Then she paused in the door, looked back at Mrs. Arms, seated with the Bible on her knee like a dim old lady saint who has just received a shock.

“Mother!” she cried, flying back to kiss her, “if only you could preach a sermon from the gospel according to Martha!”

"My dear, you are irreverent. There is no such gospel," exclaimed Mrs. Arms.

"Yes, there is! some day they'll find it, too. A lot of tear-stained tablets with all your sorrows, Mother, with all the griefs of all the women who have ever lived written upon them. The thoughts you've had and believed rebellious; the beautiful, beautiful deeds you've done and didn't know were beautiful at all—they'll be written there, scriptures, too. And they'll be sweeter than the psalms, braver than Moses, sadder than the covenant of Job—and so much kinder than St. Paul to just women."

The old lady was moved, her chin quivered, her eyes filled with tears. She took off her glasses and tried to look at John. She hoped he was absorbed in that *Herald*, that he was not listening.

Olive hoped he was listening.

"Yes," she went on, "and if ever you did preach a sermon, Mother, I'd be there. I'd say 'Amen!' I'd come and kneel at your altar, dear, and confess my sins to you; just to you, for you'd understand that they were not sins at all, only blind sorrows. But, so help me, I'll never tell them nor

admit them to any man!" she concluded, laughing, as she ran from the room.

"Got grit in her little gizzard, hasn't she?"—this in a deep bass voice from behind the *Herald*.

"What—what did you say, John?" asked his mother, looking round at him guiltily.

He did not repeat it, only laughed.

Things were changing fast, and Olive thought she was making progress somewhere. She did not know exactly where.

One evening when he came in John looked round for her. It gave him a curious weaned feeling not to find her waiting for him.

"Where's Olive, Mother?" he asked.

"I don't know. She was here just now," she answered. "She must have gone upstairs. The child is not well, John. I've noticed that ever since the night she had the headache and missed her supper."

He hurried upstairs, and found the sick "child" looking very well indeed.

She was seated beside the window, wearing something filmy, with pale green leaves in it, over silver embroidered satin. The bodice was cut low, and there was a thin silver chain round her neck with a

dull flat piece of old jade hanging from it like an evergreen leaf upon her white breast. The effect she produced was of a particularly frosty and beautiful winter twilight—the younger part of a very dark night—with her face for a star that had wandered out above that silver and gray mist ahead of the other stars—therefore very lonely.

“Good evening, Mrs. Arms!” said John, bowing low before her in his baggy trousers and his shabby coat. It was always evening in Valhalla after twelve o’clock in the day.

“Good afternoon, John!” returned the star, stirring the mist by lifting one satin-slipped foot and crossing its knees carelessly after the manner of stars in that element, but conceding not one beam of recognition by so much as a glance of the eye. It was as if she had outclassed him in some way peculiar to stars, as if he were an old runt of a tree clothed in rough bark with only a few ragged branches to his credit.

He was mystified. He was still further confused at the sight of his own best clothes laid out upon the bed, with a very high stiff collar ringed on top. “Where are we going?” he asked,

looking from the folded raiment on the bed back to Olive.

“Nowhere; just downstairs to dinner as usual. But we always dress for you in the evening, Mother and I, and gentlemen always do, too.”

Here was one gentleman who always did not dress in the evening. If there was any difference, he was inclined to undress. The best he could do after the labours of the day was to bathe his face and hands and brush his hair.

“Your collars are awful, John—a year out of style. I’ve bought some for you; not quite correct, but a little better,” she said, as she rose and swept past him to the door. “Your bath is ready, and you’ll have to hurry,” she said, closing it behind her.

If she had dashed ice water over him he could not have been more astonished.

“Well, I be damned!” he murmured under his breath, still staring at the door.

He looked at himself very much as Adam must have done on the day when he discovered that his honest skin was not the proper garment to wear with Eve to a Paradise dinner. He put one leg out, then the other, studied his dusty shoes. He turned

to the mirror and considered the wrinkled front of his negligée shirt with the collar sagging round his neck. Then he went and sat down before the things on the bed, fixed his eyes gloomily upon them.

It was not that he minded putting them on—damn-it, no!—but it was what that meant, the confession.

At last he made up his mind. Olive must do what he told her to do. He would humour her in this small matter. He would dress for dinner if she wanted him to. He would prove to her that he was ready to please her.

He reached over for the collar, examined it, and began to grin. It is very bad for a woman when her husband grins like that behind her back.

“What can be keeping John? Everything is getting cold; supper will not be fit to eat!” exclaimed Mrs. Arms nervously.

“John is dressing,” said Olive.

“Dressing!” exclaimed his mother. “Are you expecting company this evening?”

“No; we are just going to look decent in the evenings, that’s all. I told John he had to change.”

“And did he do it?”—mildly astonished at this unexpected exhibition of authority.

"He's doing it, I suppose," returned Olive primly.

At this moment the victim appeared. Mrs. Arms gasped and threw up her hands. Olive took one look at him and shrieked. She should have been ashamed, but she was not; she clapped her hands and laughed until she was breathless.

He was clothed in his Sunday clothes, all right. His black trousers firmly creased, his coat elegantly buttoned across his breast. His shoes glistened, but his collar was at least one number too large for him. He looked more like a savage than ever, like a savage with no sense of clothes. The upper part of his face alone could be seen; his chin was concealed behind that stiff white band of linen which had ears in the wrong place.

He advanced with exaggerated dignity, bowed, and offered Olive his arm.

"But, John," she cried, hanging back, "you must change that collar; you can't possibly eat with your mouth down in that hollow!"

"It's the style, my dear. I must do the best I can. Not for worlds would I change it!"

They really had a very gay evening after Olive

with her own deft fingers had ripped off the collar and freed her husband.

But you can be very cheerful without changing your mind about the main issue.

The next morning when John was half dressed, he tiptoed to the bed and looked down at Olive, who was apparently sleeping soundly. Her hands were folded like a child's upon her breast, her black hair lay in ringlets upon the pillow. She was pale like a pearl, as innocent looking as that.

He did not want to disturb her. But everybody was out of bed before seven o'clock in Valhalla. It was inconceivable that any one should not rise at least by seven. Suddenly he saw that her eyelids quivered very slightly.

"Hello, you are awake, then," he said.

"No, I'm not; I'm fast asleep," she sighed, snuggling down deeper into the pillow.

"Time to get up!" he laughed, kissing her.

She did not get up. She turned over, offered him her back, and the wall her face.

"Seven o'clock, Olive!" he said, after waiting a moment.

"I don't care if it's eight o'clock. I'm not ac-

customed to rising so early. I shall stay in bed."

She scored. A man, however determined he is to make a good and obedient wife, cannot drag her out of bed when she will not rise without doing violence to his own dignity.

From this day he had breakfast in silence alone with his mother. And he never knew that the moment he was out of the room Olive dashed into the tub and flew into her clothes and was usually at the table before he reached the store.

When a woman makes up her mind to be perverse, she can surpass a man in mere stubbornness so far that he is not in her class. She is subtle about it, always in a position to prove her innocence if he protests. Olive found a hundred ways to obstruct and confuse John. From playing with him as if he had been her funny home-made rag doll that first month, winning laughter and delight from his "dear queer ways" as she called them, she now gave her attention to changing those dear queer ways. Why, oh, why, if he used tobacco, didn't he smoke cigarettes instead of that horrid pipe? It made her sick, positively did!

"I like cigarettes myself, John. We could have

such a nice time here in the evenings smoking together!" she said, having forced him to resign the pipe on penalty of leaving the room, and never staying in it if he didn't.

"I'd like to see my wife smoke!" he exclaimed indignantly.

The same evening Colonel Ripley and his wife came to call.

"I hope you are enjoying living here," said Mrs. Ripley when Olive came over and sat down beside her on the sofa.

"Oh, no, I wouldn't think of doing such a thing," she chimed loud enough for John and the Colonel to hear.

"Why?" asked the old lady, mystified by such candour.

"It would be a sin, in Valhalla, wouldn't it?" returned Olive.

Then she caught the Colonel's eye fixed upon her, wittily affirmative.

"By the way, Colonel Ripley, have you any cigarettes with you? John says he'd like to see me smoke," she called across to him.

John looked at the old blade darkly, as much

as to say, "If you give my wife a cigarette, I'll kill you!"

"Oh—oh, do you smoke?" asked Mrs. Ripley, sliding primly away.

"No, not since I've been here. But John does, a perfectly awful pipe. He ought to keep it in the stable, it's so strong!"

Fortunately, the Colonel did not have any cigarettes.

"I like Deities best, don't you?"—this to Mrs. Ripley.

"I don't smoke; I never saw a lady smoke in my life," she answered, emphasising the word "lady."

"No? You dip snuff here, I believe," returned Olive, as if this were merely a difference in custom, not morals, with the odds in favour of smoking.

As a matter of fact, a few elder women in the South do dip snuff. But it is a very private matter, never admitted, never referred to by a living soul, with any sense of decency. Mrs. Ripley, as it happened, was one of these women who delicately concealed her little sin and clove to it as she would not have done to the hardest virtue.

"Mr. Ripley, it's late; we must go," she said, rising with an air of outraged dignity.

"Oh, no, you've only just come. Mother will be so sorry to miss you. She's at prayer meeting with Anna Berry," protested Olive, and then added shamelessly: "I was just thinking we might have a little game of auction bridge before she gets back."

"I don't play cards!" snapped Mrs. Ripley, as if she had said, "I don't commit adultery; it's a *sin*."

"Surely people do play cards here," exclaimed Olive, as if she meant that Valhalla couldn't be without some redeeming grace.

"I know of but one person who plays cards in this town, and we don't know her!" she answered quickly.

Every one exchanged glances except Mrs. Ripley, who was still predicting her departure by keeping her eyes fixed upon the door.

"My wife refers to Mrs. Bigsby," explained the Colonel. "I've *heard* that she plays a very good game," he added, hurriedly, as he slipped forward to help Mrs. Ripley put on her coat.

When their guests were gone, Olive went back

to the sofa. She made herself as small as she could in one corner of it. She crossed her knees, waved the elevated foot gently, and stared at an engraving of Patrick Henry over the mantelpiece.

John sat staring into the fire, both feet planted upon the floor as if he never meant to move, both hands grasping his knees, his elbows sticking out, the firelight casting a red gloom over his face, which was lined with suppressed fury. The clock ticked and the coals crackled in the grate. Not a word was spoken. But the old parlour was a ring. And this man and this woman were stripped for the fray.

Olive began one of those conversations with herself with which a wife occasionally whets the edge of her spirit in the condemning silence of her husband. Wives are the only ones in the world capable of this demoniacal telepathy, because they are the only creatures living who know how to pick the lock of their husbands' minds and rummage through their indignant thoughts.

Olive, to herself, casting a quick look at John: "I've proclaimed my sins. It will be all over town to-morrow that I smoke cigarettes and gamble;

and John is furious.—He is making up his mind to stop me. No! My goodness, what an expression! I believe he is wishing it was proper for a man to beat his wife.—I'm glad I've come to myself. I'm no longer afraid of his anger.—If that wicked Bigsby person doesn't call soon, I'll be reduced to seeking her acquaintance. We could at least have a game of dummy whist.—It's been two months since I've had a new frock. To-morrow I shall order some things from my dressmaker, let the heathen rage.—Poor John! He is tugging at the millstone about his neck, *me*.—I wish he'd move—or say something— Oh——”

She rose, went to the mantel, tiptoeing, smiling down at his bowed head. She lifted an old blackened briar root pipe, holding it gingerly between her thumb and forefinger, spreading her other fingers from it, making them proclaim daintily how nasty she thought the pipe was—still, just to soothe him, she offered it. She poked as near as she dared to his nose.

His nose was not sensitive, his eyes were blind. She laid it back upon the mantel with a sigh.

“If I were dead, John, that thing held to my nose

would make me sneeze. I don't see how you can ignore it, even if you are determined to ignore me," she said aloud, flinging herself upon the sofa.

At this point John made a remark to himself without speaking which nevertheless was perfectly audible to Olive: "She has shamed me before my friends; now she thinks she will play with me. I'll settle this once for all. I've made up my mind what to do and how to handle this situation."

"What on earth is he thinking with his mouth glued together like that?" thought Olive. "I'm afraid of him. I wish I had the courage to leave this room and go upstairs. But I feel as if a sword was hanging over my head, and if I move, it will drop."

A door banged somewhere down the street.

"Oh!" she cried, starting up, "this place is so dead, that if there's a sound, just a sudden *noise*, it scares me crazy. I simply can't endure it."

John undid himself, relaxed, leaned back in his chair and stared at her moodily. He recalled something his mother had said earlier in the day.

"John, I think Olive needs a little change. She is not well. She never goes out any more. You ought to do something."

"She's not a guest, you know, Mother," he had answered coolly; "we are not entertaining her. She's my wife, a member of the family."

Olive certainly was nervous, he reflected, seeing her start at the slamming of the door. He was glad he had made up his mind to look after her better, take her seriously in hand.

"If you were going to say anything, John, what would you say?" she asked, looking at him whimsically.

"I was thinking," he answered.

"Of me?"

"Of you."

"Then please don't look so much as if you were planning my execution!"

"On the contrary, I was planning a place for you in life."

"Away from here, then. This town is a cemetery, with its virtues walking like forlorn ghosts."

"It hasn't been a month since you said you loved it," he accused.

"Yes, I remember. But you don't understand. After a lot of excitement and just the exhaustion of living every moment, one might even enjoy lying

peacefully in one's grave for a few days. But nobody wants to stay buried forever, not even the dead."

"They do stay, though."

"Not because they like it, but because we fling six feet of earth in on them—— Oh, I feel as if I could lift my arms like this, John"—stretching them tragically over her head—"and throw the dust sky high!"

"We'll change all that."

"When?"

"To-morrow; at once."

"But I don't like your expression, John; it's so——so forbidding."

"Can't expect me to look pleasant after what you did here to-night."

It was out at last, the real issue!

"Oh, telling the Ripleys that I smoked and played cards? One must be honest, John. I do play and smoke when I get the chance."

"One needn't be depraved."

"No, not like that old Ripley woman; she is bad."

"Come! Don't add slander," he said sternly.

"Yes, she is; she thinks evil, John, and nothing else. She suspects the worst in everybody because she can't really think any other way."

"She doesn't suspect me."

"Because she knows you. But since I'm a stranger, since my ways are not her ways, she thinks the worst of me."

"No worse than you admit yourself," he returned.

"Tell me this, John: am I myself, or just your wife. I can't be twins, you know."

He considered that, beginning to smile. Having made up his mind what he would do with her, he was anxious to start the experiment by being agreeable.

"Couldn't you combine your adorable self with my wife, and, I admit it, make her dearer to me?"—reaching out his hand and drawing her to him. "Couldn't you combine my wife with yourself, and so make a finer, braver, better woman?"

"John," she said, permitting herself to be taken in this snare, "did you ever feel as if the neck of your soul was being stretched and stretched until the very bones of your spirit cracked?"

"No, I never did!" he answered, laughing in spite of himself.

"Well, it's been like that for me. If you could see my soul, it would have the neck of a zebra,

striped with many stripes. I've tried so *hard* to be what you wanted me to be, and I cannot, John dear; so I'll just be myself!"

He did not know it, but she had the better of him, and was contented to be led with her long-necked soul upstairs.

This is a queer thing about married life—that a husband and wife can never get anywhere with an argument, only further apart. The one may silence the other, but neither can convince the other. The real solution is love. Having done their worst and blindest, the one to the other, Love steps in, ignores the rights and wrongs of the whole contention, and settles it upon the basis of the remaining fact that they still love each other. They do not see how they can, but they do.

You may understand a woman if you are a man; you may read the secret script of her like an open book; but no man can predict what she will do next if she is in an up-and-doing mood.

John knew exactly what he would do the next morning. He did not intend to leave Olive in bed again when he himself was out. He even rehearsed the scene.

He would say: "It's time we were up, Olive." No "my dear," nor "my sweet,"—just plain "Olive." If she did not rise, he would stand over her and say, "Get up! I mean it; none of this foolishness."

He did not go so far as to think what would happen if she refused. He knew she would not. A woman never can when a man is glaring at her with that primitive, trampling, mastodon gaze of authority, not while he is looking at her. He had nerved himself up to this with a grimness of determination which he knew would be sufficient for the emergency. He did not rest well, thinking about it. He lay awake long after he supposed Olive was peacefully asleep.

As a matter of fact, the moment he kicked his feet from under the cover, which was always the last instinctive thing he did before beginning his deep breathing exercise of profound slumber, the lids of Olive's eyes flew open, and she considered him thoughtfully. Only her particular imps know how long the inspection lasted, nor the conclusion she reached.

The next morning when he awakened he was

astonished to see Olive, fully dressed, moving softly about the room. A woman cannot lie for hours beside a man without knowing what he is thinking, if he is thinking about her. And your really wise wife never risks an encounter with her husband when she is in doubt about her ability to hold her own.

“Time you were up, John, unless you have decided to have your breakfast in bed,” she said, implying that he was that kind of a man, who made his downtrodden wife wait on him hand and foot.

He was astonished and confused. His forces were all pent up ready for the struggle, and there was to be no struggle. There she was flowing swiftly over the dam he had made of himself against her. He crawled sheepishly out of bed, very indignant at something, but not in a position to place the something.

“You must hurry. Mother will be waiting breakfast for you,” she tinkled icily, as she whisked through the door.

He thumped hastily across the room in his bare feet to where his watch lay upon the dressing table.

“Not seven o’clock!” He was relieved. If he had

overslept, she would have held the winning cards. But he had not.

“Waiting breakfast for me!” he grumbled as he got into his clothes. “For me, by cracky, when she gets up so late herself Mother doesn’t even wait for her!”

He was still in the first month’s primer of his married life, or he would have known better than to task himself with these reflections upon the injustice of women, especially wife-women.

The day passed as other days until late in the afternoon, except that Olive spent most of it writing at the old secretary in the parlour.

She was ordering two or three frocks from her dressmaker. Simple things. The whole bill, including hat, gloves, and accessories would not be above five hundred dollars, she thought. And her allowance was three hundred every month. This had been lying to her credit in the bank for over two months. But since she was ordering the things by mail, and could not discuss the styles and materials in person, she must be particular about the details. She wanted a tailored suit of some dark material, preferably blue, very *chic*. The two gowns must be elegant but not

too fussy. Madame knew her taste in everything. Something to match the winter season in clouds and flowers; not too much colour, but just enough, and so forth and so on.

She added a postscript, instructing Madame to send "the package and the bill to Mrs. John Arms, not Mr. John Arms, Valhalla, Ga."

She spent the afternoon going through her things, discarding most of them, like a fine young bird moulting her feathers.

She was so busy that she did not hear the rattle, the very noisy clanking and clattering of old wheels with loose spokes that stopped at the gate of the Arms's residence.

"Olive, my dear!" called Mrs. Arms from the foot of the stairs.

"Yes, Mother."

"John wants you. He's come to take you for a drive!"

"A drive! Oh, goody!" She ran out and fairly shouted over the banisters.

"Yes, and it's very raw; put on your cloak, wrap up well," continued the old lady.

Olive hastened to take these precautions against

the November weather. She did not recall until afterward a certain vague anxiety in Mrs. Arms's face as she looked up from the hall below. She was elated. She had had only one drive since she came to Valhalla. This was in the Ripley car. She supposed John had obtained the use of it for the occasion. John was a perfect old dear; she had only to be patient; he would come around in time.

She flew down the stairs.

"Aren't you going, Mother?" she called on the way to the door, seeing Mrs. Arms seated before the parlour fire.

"No, there won't be room," she answered.

"Of course there's room——"

"Run along, dear; John's waiting."

Olive ran. She was half-way down the walk before she caught sight of John's chariot, and of John.

He was sitting high upon the spring seat of a little old Methuselah wagon. The paint had long since disappeared from the body and frame, if indeed it had ever been painted. An old horse with a threadbare tail and skimpy mane stood slipshod in the shafts, with his head down, after the manner of these patient martyrs of man.

She had seen both the wagon and horse before. John used them to deliver his wares. Once she had laughed as the negro boy drove by the house with a stove rattling noisily in the old rickety body.

"Why do his legs jiggle so, John?" she asked, referring to the horse.

"He's very old, knees are sprung, and he's string halted in one of his hind legs. Faithful beast," he answered.

"Well, he looks faithful! Looks as if he'd been disappointed in love a thousand years ago and had never recovered!" she laughed.

That was the "turnout" with which John waited at the gate.

Olive stopped short as if really she could not believe her own eyes.

"Come on," called John.

She came very slowly, as if she were walking in her sleep, would awaken presently, and when she did——

"Jump in! He's very frisky; can't let go the line to help you!"

He was actually making a joke of it.

"John," she said, looking up at him from the

curb, "you can't, you don't expect to take me out in that thing!"

"It's all I've got to take you in!" he answered, reddening.

"Oh, you are crazy."

They measured each other.

"Get in!" he commanded.

"I will not—*not* get in!" she cried, backing off, with tears of rage and mortification in her eyes.

She never knew exactly how it happened. She saw John take a flying leap. She felt him grasp her, roughly—"brutally" was the term she used when she recalled the incident. And the next moment she was flung—"like—like a *sack!*"—upon the seat. The next after that he was beside her with the reins in his hand, and they were off down the Avenue, every spoke rattling, the wheels whining on the axles, and the old horse wagging his tail from side to side as he jiggered along under the impression that he was trotting.

They passed a number of people, who stared at them, smiled and bowed.

Olive was too angry, too startled, to return these salutes.

You may despise people and still feel their opinion of you, their comments upon your misfortune, as keenly as if they were the great of the earth. This explains the tyranny of waiters and bellboys and porters over the public. Olive did passionately despise the citizens of Valhalla, but this fact did not lessen her anguish and humiliation.

They went on through the town and out upon the country road in silence, John staring firmly ahead, Olive with trembling lips also staring straight ahead in front of her at the bleak fields, and at the old Foundry, at the smokestack leaning against the leaden skies.

"Where are we going?" she asked finally, and remembered that once before, seated in Dickie Blake's runaway car upon a summer road, she had put the same question to the mysterious stranger beside her.

"For a drive," answered John, remembering, too.

Another half a mile of silence, then it was Olive who broke it again.

"Why does this poor old beast try to stop at every house we pass? Is he calling for help, or does he wish to attract attention to his gallantry and yours?"

“He’s accustomed to delivering things to these places: plows, crockery, stoves, pipes. Maybe he thinks I’m going to ‘deliver’ you, too. But I’m not.”

There was nothing further to be said after that. And she said it in that perfect silence which is the loudest speech of woman.

When they reached the Foundry John got out, went in, and presently returned carrying an immense old anvil, reared back beneath the weight of it, the cords in his neck stretched like stout ropes, his veins swelled and purple with the effort. He deposited it in the back of the wagon with a drop which made even the old horse start, and Olive jumped and shrieked as if a mountain had fallen behind her.

John smacked his hands together, and brushed the dust and rust from his clothes serenely, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for brides to shriek.

“I’ve sold this anvil to the blacksmith,” he said, going round to soothe the old horse, who thought, only thought, he might run away in case that noise was repeated.

Olive hoped he would run, and throw her out and kill her. She longed to die.

"We own all this," he said, holding the bridle with one hand and waving the other in a wide circle, "as far as you can see. And this earth is one solid bed of the finest iron ore."

Olive refused to permit herself to be included in that married "we." She merely lifted her chin by way of detaching herself from this man and his iron. When a woman sulks, she puts her whole mind upon it. She does not allow her attention to wander, not by even a glance, from the business in hand.

"When I get a few thousand dollars ahead, I shall open this foundry again; in a small way at first, but I shall begin to be what I am, an iron master. Then we shall be rich ever after."

He gave her that further encouragement as cheerfully as if she had listened with enthusiasm to the whole scheme. She allowed something which resembled the serpent of a smile to curl her lips: this was the only reply she made to the "few thousands ahead" idea, as John climbed back upon the seat.

He turned the horse and the wagon, the latter groaning and whining, the former pricking up his ears at the thought of jogging back to his stable.

As they were entering the town, there was a roar behind, and the next moment a car passed them. Mrs. Bigsby and the Colonel occupied the front seat. They both bowed hastily as they passed, as you do sometimes bow at the last moment when you are not expecting to see that particular person. The car stopped. The Colonel thrust his head out and waved frantically, meaning that he had something delightful to say.

The old horse made an effort to meet the situation. In spite of the fact that John pulled on the reins, he quickened his pace.

“Good afternoon.”

It was Mrs. Bigsby who leaned forward as they drew up, including both of them with a charming smile.

“I’m so glad we came up with you young people,” she said. “Colonel Ripley tells me you play auction bridge——”

“Oh, I love it!” put in Olive quickly.

“Then come over to dinner Thursday night, quite informally, and we’ll have a little game.”

“We’ll be delighted to come!” answered Olive, before John could open his mouth to refuse.

"So glad you can manage it. Dinner at seven," purred Mrs. Bigsby.

"Wait! Hold on there!" shouted John to the Colonel, who was driving. But the Colonel was deaf. The car jumped ahead and was immediately far in advance.

"What did you do that for?" John demanded angrily, turning on his wife. "You know we cannot accept an invitation to that woman's house."

"We have accepted one," she returned, laughing, and then entreatingly she added: "I must have something to do, John."

"You shall, but it won't be playing cards with Mrs. Bigsby. That's one of the ways she makes her living."

"Oh, she plays for money, then? We always did, too; not much, just enough to make it interesting," she confessed.

"Get up!" This to the horse, slapping his back with the reins.

Olive's good humour was restored by this incident. She talked all the way down the Avenue to her silent and morose husband.

"It's been a perfectly lovely ride!" she told Mrs.

Arms when she ran into the house. Something warned her not to add the news which was on the tip of her tongue, that they were going to dine with Mrs. Bigsby Thursday evening. She said to herself as she ran upstairs that she *would, would* go to Mrs. Bigsby's. It was beyond her power to think that probably she would be entirely out of the class of light-literature life to which Mrs. Bigsby belonged by Thursday.

Her heart was so set upon this one thing, upon keeping John in a good humour and winning him to her wishes, that she obeyed almost meekly the next morning when he told her he wanted her to come down to the store.

"What for, John dear?" she asked.

"I need you," he answered, and waited for her while she went to put on her hat and coat.

They walked in silence, John with the air of abstraction a man wears when he contemplates certain changes in the world's history. Olive sensed these changes, that they might have some remote bearing upon her own fate. And the nearer they came to the store, the more her heart misgave her. She almost made up her mind to excuse herself and

go back home. But after another glance at John she decided that she might as well see what sort of card he had up his sleeve.

They entered, and he closed the door.

"You see it's the dull season, no custom. We may as well keep it closed while we work," he said, beginning to undo a package he carried.

"Work!" exclaimed Olive; and then catching sight of the package, "What's that?"

"One of Mother's aprons I borrowed, to keep your clothes clean. Lots of dust here," he answered, with the strings spread out, the voluminous folds widening.

"I don't understand, John"—backing off.

"Put it on while I explain!"

She knew positively that she would not put it on, she knew it even while she was tying the strings around her slender waist, but John would not take his eyes off her, so she had to do it.

"Now, we're going to take stock. Know what that is?"

She did not, but refused to say so.

"Well, we find out what we have first, what everything on these shelves is worth. Then we find

out how much we can collect of what is owing to us. Then we add it all up with our little balance in the bank, and subtract that from what we ourselves owe the wholesale hardware firms in Atlanta; and the remainder—well, this year I fear the remainder will be very small.”

She was not listening to what he said; she was doing a certain sum in the personal equation which left John as the remainder.

“But first we must straighten things out a bit, so that we can get to them,” he went on cheerfully. “I’ll sort out these axes and plows and the junk on the floor generally; you’ll get up on the counter and divide the sheep from the goats on those lower shelves. That is, the crockery from the glass, and so forth.”

She did not move. She stood with her lips parted, staring at him, endeavouring to comprehend this new and uncalled-for indignity. She, Olive Thurston, with a fortune of nearly a hundred thousand dollars, to be reduced to scrubbing John Arms’s store for him! Nothing had been said about scrubbing, but she was sure that would be included. Her lip curled at the thought. But just as it began to curl he seized her hand and said.

“Let me help you. It’s quite a step up!”

She did not know whether she really mounted, or whether he lifted her on to the counter. But she served notice on him with one look of rage as she went up. Rather than look at him again, she turned to the little pot-bellied sheep and goats, as he called the hideous stuff. She actually raised her hands to it. Then all at once she went at it furiously. She must do something until she could make up her mind what to do.

John turned and went back to the junk on the floor. He was not exactly grinning, but he was pleased with himself.

For the next twenty minutes one might have thought from the noise, from the ring of iron upon iron, from the thinner, higher jingle of glass against glass, that this was bedlam, where crazy stars were made. Clouds of dust ascended and descended. And through this confusion, the slim form of a girl could be seen crucified, with arms lifted above her head, and the huge form of a man moving indistinctly in the lower regions of terrible things.

Suddenly it happened; the inevitable conclusion

toward which both had been working indefatigably since the hour of their marriage.

John was stooping over the scattered parts of a harrow in the back of the store when something like a clap of crockery thunder fell behind him.

He leaped up, faced about, and beheld his wife. He could see her flaming eyes and flushed cheeks through the clouds of dust. She was deliberately flinging plates, cups, glasses, everything as she came to it, upon the floor, and she was working like lightning.

With two bounds he seized her, almost flung her over his head as he set her upon the floor, trembling in every limb and ghastly pale between the streaks of smut and dust upon her face.

"What does this mean?" He hissed the words through clenched teeth.

"It means I married, thinking I was to be your wife, John Arms, but I'll be no man's slave!"

He still held her by the wrists, and now he moved toward a corner where there was a chair, dragging her after him. He flung her upon it and stood before her, grief and terror in his heart, but neither fear nor mercy in his face.

"Now we'll have it out!" he said.

"That's it; just let me out, please. I want to go home!"

"You can't do that; we've a lot of work to do here before noon, and we are going to do it."

"I want to go back to Aunt Sarah—and Uncle Richard! I hate you, the shame of it all!"

She buried her face in her hands and began to weep.

"The shame of what?" he demanded.

"Of just letting myself down to this drudgery; of these mean people; of this mean, ugly little old town; of marrying a man who has no respect for me, no more than if I were a common drudge. You cannot possibly love me, John, or you would have more consideration for me. You are cruel and mean and narrow, too; like the rest, only worse."

He did not interrupt her though every word stung him like a rapier thrust. He waited until she resumed her weeping.

"Olive, all this is beside the mark. However you may regret it, you are my wife, and you must be that as long as we live."

"But we needn't live together. I don't love you,

John; I couldn't after the way you have treated me."

Thereupon she ceased to weep, sat up and regarded him sadly.

"Well, you'll have to begin all over again and learn to love me—the man, this one, not the one you thought you could make me. Because I will not let you go."

"You mean to keep me; you have no more respect for yourself than to try to keep me after what I've said?"

"I'd keep you if I had to chain you to the wall, because I respect myself and you!" was the astonishing answer.

"Oh, the horror of it!" she cried, throwing back her head and clasping her hands.

"Listen, Olive; haven't you complained for a month that you had nothing to do, that you were bored to distraction——"

"Yes, but that didn't mean that I wanted to—to scrub your floors for you, nor clean your—your nasty things here!" she interrupted.

"What did you want, then?"

"I want to live as I've always lived. I want a

car; I want pretty things to wear; I want to go driving—not in a delivery wagon; I want to amuse myself, to have friends, the kind of people I've always known."

"Well, why don't you ask some of your friends to visit us?"

"What! Here, with our little negro maid to do everything about the house, with you coming in looking like a burglar—or—a socialist in your dingy clothes, with nothing here to entertain them? You must be crazy to think I have so little pride."

Seeing that he remained silent, she went on:

"And it's all so unnecessary. We could have everything, every luxury. Renovate the house, paint it, keep servants, a chauffeur, do things right, be somebody, wake up this old town. I have a fortune, John; I'm a rich woman. And you, you needn't work at all. You could be a gentleman, have your club, play golf, enjoy life."

"On my wife's money. No, thank you! Besides, what would I have in common with your clubfellow, with your golfstick hero? I'm a man!"

She looked at him. She had to admit that he was.

"Let's get down to the root of this matter."

"I'm in the dust of it already!"

"I want to ask you a question and I want you to answer it upon your honour," he went on, without noticing this interruption.

She looked at him as if she were bracing herself against him with all the animosity and fear of a helpless woman.

"Suppose I did exactly as you wish. Suppose we got the car, changed the old house until it shrieked your wealth from the roof and walls; and you had your maid, and I a manservant, and I wore fine clothes, and we entertained and did nothing but amuse ourselves—would you regret that you married me? That's the question I want you to answer."

"No, I'm certain I would not," she answered slowly, as if she looked inward upon her own heart.

"Then it's not me you care for at all. It's only appearances. Just to be idle, like the useless men you've known. Just to be fashionable and extravagant like the worse than useless women you've known. To play, to dance, to flirt, and never to earn with your own hands and brains the right to live. Good God! you've married a man, not a cad,

and you haven't got the sense to know the difference!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"It wouldn't be like that, John."

"Yes, it would, worse than words can paint. You'd have to give me a check with which to buy my clothes, or maybe you'd make me an allowance! Every man, every woman, that passed us in this town would know your husband was your baby, that you dressed and fed and dandled him. Lord!——"

"We needn't live in this town," she interrupted.

"It doesn't matter where we lived. I'd be your rag doll, and everybody would know it."

"At least I should be allowed to spend my own money, then, for my own needs—and pleasures," she said by way of evading that picture of John as a rag doll.

"And reduce me to the shame of having a wife whom I did not support. Never! I can take care of you, give you—everything the wife of a poor man ought to have, or should want!" he answered.

You do not need to lay the scene of a great drama in a proud place. It is the veracity of human nature that counts. Only portray some truth, some falsehood which is the truth of the times, anything that

is common to life, and you are sure of convincing effect, no matter where the scene is laid. In this dingy store, in this dead and forgotten town, this man and this woman stared at each other through the grime and dust. They saw between them the naked truth of the most hideous and disintegrating problem of social and domestic life, out of which come false standards, false ideals, and decay rising like a poisonous vapour—the desire for indulgence, the shrinking from responsibilities which belong to the common lot, all springing from wealth or the struggle for wealth.

John considered the pathetic figure of his wife, very sad now, with the flame of anger gone from her eyes, with her arms hanging listlessly upon either side of the chair. And he was moved, but as a physician is moved who must perform a dangerous and perhaps fatal operation merely with the chance of saving the patient's life. He had no compunctions about the course he meant to pursue in this matter; on the contrary, he was more determined than ever.

"I must be frank with you, dear," he began more kindly.

"You are always frank, John. That is your vice. The sword you use for wounding me," she put in.

"We are both armed with swords," he said with a grim smile. "You are an able woman, Olive. You have brains, energy, and an invincible will, yet what have you ever done with your unusual gifts? Not one good or useful service. Your accomplishments have all been employed for self-indulgence. You are dissipated, just as dissipated as any other drunkard. You crave change, excitement, diversion. This is why you find the life here so hard. You have been compelled to do without your usual intoxicants."

"You add insult to injury," she cried, flaming up.

"No, I'm telling you the wholesome truth about yourself."

"Then why did you marry me?"

"Because I knew you were capable of better things; because——"

"Oh, your horrid, everlasting better things, I hate them!" she cried.

"But you must learn to love them. Do you know why the people here are not pleasure mad?"

It's because they *work*. These are the men and the women who are holding this civilisation together, keeping the covenants; not the people you have known. If we were all like them, society, law, honour, chastity would be legends."

"And if they were all like you, what would the world be?" she demanded, which was such a shrewd question he pretended not to hear it. But all at once his manner changed. He knelt beside her, drew her gently to him, and she did not resist. She was tired and she was frightened.

"Listen, my sweet; success never made a man. It's the fight, the effort to win that makes him, determines his honour and his quality. You have missed all that."

"I don't want to be a man, John," she moaned, laying her head upon his shoulder.

"No, heaven forbid; but you must help me to be one, not a mendicant dependent upon your charity. If you will, Olive my dear, I promise you that I shall win all things for you, and your husband!"

She sighed.

He lifted her to her feet, led her to the tin basin

and water bucket on the shelf behind the nail kegs. He rummaged somewhere beneath and found a clean towel.

She looked up at him as he dipped the end of it in the basin. Her face was streaked where the tears had made white lines in the dirt. He began to laugh as he bathed that sad little countenance. He kissed her tenderly. He lifted each grimy hand, cocked his eye at it, was deeply impressed, kissed them also, before he thrust them in the basin. She laughed, too, and found that it made her weep again to laugh. It made no difference. He attended to her tears, as a mother soothes her child.

John was coming on! Never before had she felt so near to him, so sure of his love. But, oh heaven! his love was nearly as terrible as his anger.

Still, she was very happy beneath her deep discontent. He had not changed that. She knew that he was right. She had never thought of these things as he had put them before her. But it was appalling to be the prisoner of righteousness. And from that hour this thought was constantly with her. She was the prisoner of John's righteousness. She was in bondage to awful forces outside herself.

She gave up once and for all the conviction that he and these surroundings were inferior to the men and the conditions she had been accustomed to. She knew now that the fault was in her. But it was *there*. And she was *here* in this cruel place, with an invincibly good man for a keeper. She did not know what she should, or could do about it. Nothing, she supposed; just get through from one day to the next somehow. The only thing she knew for certain was that they would not go to Mrs. Bigsby's dinner party; that she would not even think of suggesting such a thing to John now, not after the livid light he had shed upon her world, which was not dissimilar except in details from Mrs. Bigsby's little chromo world.

They went home for lunch together. John said, staring with a grin at the broken glass and crockery upon the floor:

"That's too much of a job after what we've been through!"

"I'll replace it all—with gold-rimmed china, John," she returned tremulously, looking back at the mess from the door as they went out.

"No, my sweet. It was worth it, that smashing.

That is your own foolish pride down there broken upon the floor. We've done with it forever."

She did not reply. He was obliged to take her silence for assent. But they were so peaceful and kind to each other when they reached the house that Mrs. Arms was almost elated. She had been anxious about the morning's work. She knew John, and she had her suspicions of Olive. She did not know what might happen when he undertook to put her to work in the store. And she inferred that this was his purpose when he borrowed the apron. But it had evidently turned out all right. Olive was a little pale, to be sure. But she had never seen John so tenderly considerate of his wife. Marriage was really wonderful. It did unite two people in the most marvellous way, no matter how far apart they had been before.

Olive was upstairs resting now, she supposed. She was glad John said nothing about taking her back to the store after lunch.

As a matter of fact, Olive was upstairs weeping her heart out. But fortunately their nearest and dearest do not know every time a wife does that. And the world never suspects the terror of the

young wife who has left her own people and her own more familiar gods for her husband, his people, and his more or less strange gods. They have no protection, these young and tender beings. It is not really good form to return to one's own tribe, and they cannot call the police. So they weep, and wonder how in the world they can endure this strange man, and his strange god, and how in the world it will all end; because of course it must end somehow, some time, since they cannot possibly live through it, not for years and years and Y-E-A-R-S.

Affairs went smoothly for a week. Olive helped John with his stock taking in the forenoons, returning very tired, with her clothes mussed. Mrs. Arms was keen enough to observe that they never talked about their business in the evenings. They did not talk at all. Olive was as silent as her husband, read when he read, sat and looked into the fire when he sat and looked into the fire.

However, the old lady was about to settle down after the manner of the aged in this situation, when without warning the whole thing slid again from under her feet.

The young have very little consideration for the

old. They are always changing things and adjusting things to themselves so that the old ones never can stay "put," until after the funeral, when clods fall upon the coffin lid and the grass springs above the clods. Then perhaps they do rest.

Mrs. Arms was in the pantry bending over the flour bin late one afternoon when John sought a private interview with her. This was what he said:

"I want to speak with you privately, Mother."

The old lady stood up, dusted the flour from her hands, and looked startled. Where was the public? There was not a soul in sight except John. 'Cindy, the cook, was having her afternoon off. Did he think the soda jar had ears?

"Shall we go in the parlour?" she asked, flustered because he looked so grave.

"No, Olive's in there," he answered, leading the way through the back door.

They went out behind the kitchen and sat down upon a bench under the grape arbour, which spread above them, a web of naked vines in the November twilight.

"Is anything the matter, John?" she asked anxiously.

"Mother, wouldn't you like to make a visit to Aunt Clarinda?" he began.

"Visit your Aunt Clarinda! What for?"

"Well, you need the rest, for one thing."

"I'm not tired, John; I've been really happy since you and Olive married, and I haven't seen Clarinda in so long—ten years it's been since I was out there—that, well, I don't feel drawn to go. Besides, you and Olive couldn't get on without me," she concluded.

"That's it: Olive must learn to get on without you, and she never will so long as you do everything for her; and it is not my idea to make a professional woman of my wife, a hardware clerk," he began again slowly.

"I've wondered at you, John. The women in your family have always been true to their sphere."

"I want Olive to learn the duties of a home. That's why I want you to pay that visit to Aunt Clarinda. And 'Cindy must have a vacation, too."

"What are you thinking of? Olive can't cook."

"She must learn. You did all the work of the house the last five years Father lived, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I knew something about it."

"She must learn."

"But not all at once. You are too hard on her, John. I've wanted to tell you so."

"The way to teach Olive is to drop the whole thing on her so hard she'll feel it; won't have time to mope. I never heard you complain of being bored."

"But she's young, John, and accustomed to have her way."

"She's married and must realise the responsibilities of her position. And she doesn't. She's thinking from morning till night how to escape these duties, this life," he said, which indicates that he was not so ignorant as he appeared to be of what was going on behind the closed doors of Olive's mind.

"I think you are making a grave mistake, my son. Women, they are not the same these days. They *think*, John. I used never to think apart from your father, his wishes, his comfort. You oughtn't to start Olive to thinking against you."

"I'm going to give her the opportunity to think and do for me, as I live and work for her."

"Well, I'll go if you insist," she agreed with a

sigh; "but you must keep 'Cindy. Olive couldn't make a biscuit. I've tried her."

"She must learn. 'Cindy's going when you go, and when you return I'll wager you'll find things all right here. Olive's very capable. All she needs is the right chance to make good."

They went back in the house, Mrs. Arms feeling like a traitor as she entered the parlour and saw Olive reading the society column of the Atlanta paper, serenely unconscious of the plot against her peace.

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In the afternoon on the day of Mrs. Arms's departure to visit her sister, Olive met her husband at the door with a tragic face.

"John," she gasped, "'Cindy is gone, says she won't be back till Mother returns. What are we to do?"

"Simplest thing in the world; I'll make the fire in the stove, and you'll get the dinner," he answered cheerfully.

"But I can't! I don't know how to cook!"

"You'll have to learn. Part of a woman's work in the home," he said on his way to the kitchen.

The most intelligent and capable women in the world are those who have developed their wits and energies in the keenest competition in the world—that of fashionable society. Leave them to devote the same amount of thought and enterprise to any other effort, whatever it is, from running a business to practising the domestic arts, and they will succeed nine times out of ten. Anything which develops intelligence and awakens energies is training for anything else that person undertakes.

Olive had suffered so many shocks to her pride lately that one more grievance only served to make her desperate. She despised cooking. She thought it was outrageous that this drudgery should be required of her. But she would show John that she could do it, and do it well; that she was not the useless creature he seemed to think she was.

And she did, with a fury which amounted to inspiration. She left nothing undone. If she was to be a slave, she would be a slave. She worked from morning till night, and she prepared such food as John said he'd never tasted in his life. She knew herself that it was good, but she received his praise with cool dignity.

Before the end of the week it was John who suggested that they should have cold suppers in the evenings, for he saw that she was exhausted with the unaccustomed tasks. She objected at first, said it made no difference to her whether she cooked, or rubbed silver, or did something else—there was always more than she could do. She let him know that she merely yielded to his demands about the cold suppers.

It was his custom after that to come home about five o'clock and go to the refrigerator on the back porch, for a "snack," as he called it. And Olive hated the word. It sounded so vulgar. At eight o'clock they had their real supper on a tray before the parlour fire.

This gave them more time together in the evenings, but it hung heavy upon their hands. You may lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. You may force a woman to your will, but you cannot make her willing.

Olive had never been in such a state of revolt as she was now. For now she perceived clearly the issue between her and her husband. She must be not the kind of woman she was, but the kind of wife

he wanted. There was a difference of one generation and sixty thousand dollars between these two women. For she never forgot that she had a fortune which really made her independent of this man.

One night when she had prepared a particularly appetising and dainty supper, he looked up at her with praising eyes.

“You see, my beloved, it’s not the knowing of things that counts,” he said; “it’s the knowing of things along the way you have to go.”

“But a man chooses the way he goes,” she answered coldly.

“And you chose yours, didn’t you?”

“A wife can’t be anything but a wife, it seems,” she answered with trembling lips; “but a man can be anything he likes. He can change his business—add something else to it.”

“So can a wife. She can become a mother.”

His tone was not accusative. They had not been married long enough for that. Still, she felt the deep, searching gaze fixed intently upon her.

Was there no end to what this man would have of her, she asked herself. He demanded her body, all the energies of her life; and now, O God! he

was demanding her blood. She felt like that, as she sat before him, but withdrawn from him by the deepest instincts of a woman's sense of self-protection.

You do not settle one issue in the married life before another issue pops its head up and says: "What about me? I'm here, too." This is inevitable, for it is the married people who work out the models of life, test problems by living through them, settle all the economics and social questions that are settled at all, and of which we hear so much. They are the experimental stations which determine civilisation and every form of government, all its laws and unlawfulness. This is why the up-and-doing married couples do not get along well together. They have so much to do, to try out on each other. It is only in the last years of their union, when they are tired and worn out, that they give it up and live happily ever after, because by this time they can leave the racket and the experiments to the next set of married people.

A week passed before John and Olive mustered the courage to seize on one another by their respective demons and go at it again—all in the in-

terest of humanity, you understand, though they were far from suspecting that they were engaged in such a large business.

This time Olive was the aggressor. They were seated as usual before the parlour fire. They had divided the evening paper between them.

Olive was only pretending to read. She was working up her courage to start something; and being a woman, she knew how to begin a long way from where she meant to land.

"The social unrest in this country is a terrible thing," she said, addressing the back of John's paper. He did not rise to the bait, went on reading in that inhuman manner peculiar to husbands.

"It's especially bad in the cities," she urged, confidently, for she knew something of these matters. She had belonged to the Colonist Club in New York, and they study economics there, I can tell you, till the female mind burns them up, leaves a trail of cinders behind it.

"Eh? What did you say, Olive?"

"I was just thinking out loud," she answered. "Did you hear me?"

"Well, I thought I heard a nice little sound," he

said, smiling, as he laid aside his paper. "What was the nice little sound telling me?"

"I was saying something about the social unrest. It's awful, you know."

"Imaginary, my dear, purely imaginary."

"But it is not, John. There are hundreds of thousands of men out of work in New York. And they are starving."

"Starving because they won't work, then."

"They can't; there isn't enough for them to do."

"Yes, there is: more to be done than all of them and as many more could accomplish. Whenever you hear of a thousand or a hundred thousand men wanting jobs, just remember this: that there are wide places in this country where men are calling for labour and can't get it."

"Where, for example?"

"In all the hard places where it requires strength and endurance and courage. In the fields, for example. This country doesn't produce a third of the crops it should produce, because there are not enough men willing to do that kind of work. It's hard work. Those fellows who are shrieking and leading riots in the cities because they haven't got work are

fellows who want a job at folding circulars for two dollars a day, or running a machine, something light and easy. They don't want to work for what they can honestly win from the earth, because they are lazy, not equal to the weather, the exposure. They haven't got the grit to get down to it and *make* their own bread. Want to buy it. Most of the poverty, most of the unhappiness, and most of the disorders of our times come from just that one thing: the desire for a soft place. And there aren't any for honest men."

"Still, conditions change, and that changes everything else, even morals. Morals are the result of conditions, aren't they?"

She knew she was right, for she had heard that from a lecturer who was an authority on the history of morals. But she was trying to lead John up to where she was going.

"Morals *are*. We don't make them. We never have. We only damage them with our conditions. They were written into us with our flesh and blood, into the earth, into every flower that blooms, every tree that spreads its branches, into the very grass that covers the bare places, when we and they were

created in the beginning. Conformity to order, *that* order, means health, virtue, honour, all the rest of 'em. And in so far as we do not conform we must perish. That's law, it's not an accident. We do perish. As soon as we find all of our morals and practise them, we shall live, and we shall be clean."

John was a thinker when he got started. But he did not think along recognised lines. She supposed it was because he was not trained.

"We are growing better, though; we are more charitable, because we recognise the facts of life. We are not so narrow about some things," she said, after a pause.

"I don't know; they say we are progressing. I'm not dead certain!" he laughed.

"There's divorce, now. You believe in that, don't you?"

She was in sight at last, and John stared at her moodily, as a man will when he is driving a double team of reflections through his mind.

"I believe in marriage," he answered, giving her the benefit of one line. "Whoever believes in marriage cannot believe in divorce. And whoever believes in divorce cannot absolutely believe in marriage."

"But nearly every one believes in divorce these days," she insisted.

"And presently nearly every one will be getting a divorce. That's why. They accept marriage incidentally and pin their faith to the ultimate divorce."

This was so near an accusation that she took refuge in silence.

"But," he went on, "if I believed in divorce at all for anything, I'd believe in it for the same reason that so many women demand it."

"What's that?"

"For non-support."

"Non-support!"

"Isn't that what they call it? When a man fails or refuses to provide for his wife?"

He was grinning at her, but it was not a pleasant grin.

"Surely you don't think a wife ought to support her husband?" she exclaimed at this evident contradiction between John himself and his creed.

"I do. A wife is under the same obligation to provide for her husband that he is to her."

"In what way? How can she?"

“Well, he furnishes the home, but she must make it his home and hers, with the labour of her hands, as he labours for her that she may have the means with which to create the home. She is his helpmeet. That’s what she is made for. She should support him with her faith; her love and her hopes should live in him. She should furnish their home with peace, health, cheerfulness—and children.”

“Children!”

“Especially children. That’s one of the reasons an ambitious, honourable man marries. He finds the woman he wants to be the mother of his children. He wishes to provide for his and her immortality through the next generation with the sons and daughters of his body.”

“O God! he doesn’t even say ‘child,’ he said ‘children!’” she thought. She saw herself for one brief instant surrounded by a perfect mob of yelling, dancing, whimpering children, all sons and daughters of John’s body. Good heavens! Where would her body be? How would it look? Old, withered, ugly. The worst thing about it was one little thing. She saw a fringe of gray hair hanging untidily about her neck behind. She had often

noticed that mothers of many children seemed to come unravelled this way behind.

The next cruellest thing to nature in the fate of a wife is the husband who is determined to make more young and beautiful nature out of her, and at her expense. The thought was too awful. She refused to meet John's gaze. She erased him from her eyeballs.

"Of course," he said, taking up the subject again, "if he marries a barren woman, he pities her misfortune. And it is his duty to love and cherish her even in his sore disappointment. But I say if anything more than another entitled a man to a divorce, it would be the fact that his wife *refused* to bear his children. Recall the women you have known, the fashionable idle women, who spend their husband's substance as if it were water they dashed upon the ground. Not one in four bears children. They are rogues, these women, who steal first the names of their husbands and bury them with their dust, and then they steal lives from the generation to come, just because they are mean, selfish, with no thought except for their own pleasure. If I had——"

"Good-night, John; I'm going upstairs to bed,"

Olive interrupted, rising and walking from the room hastily, as if she hoped to win the door before she lost control of herself.

A woman's spirit is the most deceptive thing she has among her many deceptions. She will give it up, let it lie flat, beating its wings in the dust so long as it entertains her to play the martyr. Then when you least expect it, when you think she is done with the pomp and vainglories of this world forever, she seizes it and rises with it higher, and flies further than any man can follow, provided she gets a good start. You want to suspect your wife most when she is meekest. She is only tying up a few things getting ready to leave you in her astral body, though her body may remain by your side for the next forty years. It is only her ghost, not really all of her. The best wives may accomplish this kind of divorce with no compunction at all, and you never are the wiser.

John, being more of a man than a psychic husband, observed nothing strange about Olive the next day. It was true that she seemed preoccupied, that she hurried from one task to another as if she had something else on her mind which must be

done, as if there was no time to be lost if she really got round to it. But this is often the manner of busy housewives. If anything, he was gratified to see how diligently she worked, and with what dispatch. Showed that she was taking a woman's interest in the home and its duties.

"I was right to get Mother off on that visit and give Olive a chance. She's taking hold better than I hoped she would," he reflected as he approached the house late in the afternoon.

He ran up the steps, entered the hall, and stopped short. He could see the fire burning brightly in the parlour grate through the open door. But he did not see Olive, and he did not see her moving about in the kitchen. What was more, he could not feel her presence, as he always did even if she was upstairs behind a closed door.

"Olive!" he called.

No answer.

Then he noticed that the old walnut hat rack beside the wall was spreading its naked arms and looking at him with his own face questioningly from the little round mirror between the horns. Olive's long coat and hat which always hung there were gone.

"She's out for a walk," he thought, as he made his way to the refrigerator on the back porch. He was hungry. He was going to get his "snack," as usual.

When he opened the door and stooped down, the first thing he saw was not the cake, beautifully frosted, not the baked fowl, still warm from the oven, nor the bowl of lettuce on the top shelf, but a note pinned to a loaf of fresh bread.

He picked it off, too dumbfounded to think what it meant, opened the crisp little blue sheet and read:

DEAR JOHN:

If you had said *child* last night, it would not have been so awful, but you said "*children*," and I just can't stand it. I've gone home.

OLIVE.

P. S. Mother will be coming back to-morrow. I've cooked enough things to last you until then.

By all the laws governing the outraged feelings of husbands deserted, he should have been furious. But as he read it over the second time, recalling the conversation of the night before, he was moved to compassion.

"The poor little goose!" he exclaimed.

Then he jumped, looked at his watch. Five o'clock! She must have taken the local at four-thirty for Atlanta. The express was due in ten minutes. He could make it!

He rushed through the hall, seized his hat, banged the front door after him, and made for the station.

PART THREE

PART THREE

WHEN Olive stepped from the train in Atlanta, the first face she saw was that of her husband.

"Hello!" he said, grinning.

"John!" she gasped, "how'd you get here?"

"Flew. Had to fly in order to overtake you. Took the express. Passed you at Kingston," he answered, still grinning, as he drew her arm in his and pressed it close to his side.

They walked out of the old Union Station together. A cold November rain was falling, the streets glistened like black mirrors. The electric light globes on either side were reflected there. They seemed to swing deeply sunken in that bright surface. Umbrellas bobbed like round-top fungus above the hurrying crowds. Taxis and automobiles slid noiselessly in and out through the rattling drays. A long line of dingy cabs with raw-boned horses drooping between the shafts stood with their

backs to the sidewalk outside the station. But John ignored the shouting drivers, the more dignified solicitation of the taxi chauffeurs. It cost fifty cents to ride in one of those things.

"Well, that fellow is a chump, soaking a pretty gal like that because he's too stingy to dig up his fare!" growled an old man from his seat upon a particularly disreputable cab.

The "chump" heard him, but he had eyes only for the "pretty gal," smiling eyes, too.

Olive was wearing the "chic" tailored suit she had ordered from Madame, and she wore a cunning little hat on her head, shaped like a Scotch bonnet, with a green and red checked band around it, a slim rakish feather lacing it, and two narrow black ribbons hanging down to the nape of her neck behind. Beneath John's quizzical gaze she could not have felt more guilty if she had stolen these things, even the yellow chamois gloves upon her hands and the smart black and tan shoes that were twinkling in and out from beneath her skirt.

"You are looking mighty fine, Honey," he said.

"And I'm getting soaking wet! Where are we going, John?"

"Well, not to the church this time," he answered, as they both recalled a former occasion when she asked this question.

Olive reddened until her face was a rose in the rain, as crimson and as wet as that.

"But," he added, praising her with his eyes, "I'd marry you again this minute if I hadn't done it already."

"I'm not so sure I would!" she answered, not entirely able to cheat the rose of a smile.

"Oh, yes, you would, my sweet. You are born with the blood of adventure calling in your veins. You'd do it again, even though you know how dingy the store is, and what a stupid man John is."

"You are a sport yourself, John." She actually laughed.

"Well, not what you'd call an out and out bookie, who stands to win or lose. I always bet on a sure thing, and I hold to it until I win," he answered gaily.

She respected him, and she could not help admiring him more than she had ever thought possible. Women are made very queer and primitive by the soul. They never quite yield to any man who

is not able and sufficiently ruthless to outwit them, take them, and keep them.

Still, the humblest wife resents having her togs spoiled. Olive wondered, as they climbed the steps to the viaduct and turned down Marietta Street, if John was deliberately trying to ruin her clothes and make her skirt shrink. So she balked, planted her little feet upon the pavement. What if he was taking her to the police station? She had heard of runaway wives being "incarcerated." You couldn't tell what a man like John would do. He was dull when she wanted him to shine, and he had the speed and wit of a wild Indian when she didn't want him to at all. So she hung back, soiling the glove of her free hand to grasp the railing of the viaduct, not to be dragged on by that other hand which John was cherishing tightly with both of his.

"I just won't go another step until you tell me where we are going," she exclaimed tearfully.

"Well, I thought we'd get a little snack first. I didn't have time to eat anything before I ran for the train. Think I left the refrigerator door open in my hurry too. And then we might take in a moving picture show before we take the midnight train to

Valhalla," he answered, evidently happy at the prospect.

She sighed and went on. It was not as bad as she had expected. Besides, she had to go or make a scene; for John went, and he would have taken her with him in spite of that smile he wore if he had dragged her.

They turned into a cheap restaurant, where there were paper napkins, and no cloths upon the tables, and they had the "snack"—club sandwiches and a cup of steaming black coffee.

It may have been the coffee, or it may have been the situation that began to appeal to Olive's adventurous spirit, which was, after all, only the romantic spirit of a young girl. Anyhow, she began to effervesce. She did not want to talk, but she did talk. She did not want to smile, but she could not help smiling at this handsome, cool-eyed, close-lipped man, who would keep her though the heavens fell. She did not want to be glad that he had followed her and taken her again, but she could not help being glad. It simplified things, his coming for her. She had never answered Aunt Sarah's letter. And she did not know how Aunt Sarah would have received

her dropping in as a runaway wife. No matter which way she turned, she was "in for it." She might as well make the best of it; at least, until Uncle Richard came home.

She held to that reservation doggedly. She thought she could explain to Uncle Richard—all except about the "children." He was a very smart man, Uncle Richard was, and she did hope he'd come back—before it was too late! He'd be able to explain to John how impossible it was to make a cook and a slave and a scrub-woman out of his niece, who had a fortune, and naturally a right to live accordingly.

They went out again in the rain. Then John pointed to a most worldly bright place across the street.

"Movie, over there. That's why I chose this place for supper," he explained, almost lifting her over the wet pavement.

They went in. John smacked down two dimes at the window and received two tickets accordingly. It was a stuffy place, seething with a popular audience. And the pictures were popular, too. There was an English girl stolen by an old Turk in the

harem commissary business, who sold her to another Turk. And the girl didn't seem to mind. She was put up to dance by way of raising her price. Adventurous Englishman sees her, snatches her out of the dance, and kisses her. Terrific disturbances! He hadn't paid for her; what did he mean by kissing what he hadn't paid for? But the girl didn't seem to mind, clung to the man, eloped with him. Man kisses her again and then commits suicide. Wild applause from the audience. Girl gets kissed by another man in passing. But he is only passing. She wanders footsore and weary through a foreign land. Doesn't know what land it is, but she hopes some man will take her. Makes a mewing fuss behind a green hedge, and is dragged through it by Lord Somebody, who doesn't know what on earth to do with her. She is in England, my dear, and doesn't she know that she just mustn't, mustn't lay her beautiful head upon a man's shoulder in England, the historic resting place of Cromwell and all the puritan virtues? No, she only knows that she likes his shoulder, and won't he please kiss her? He does, and wrings his hands in horror while the audience cheers again. And just as everybody thinks

she is going to marry him like a decent woman, she runs off with his bosom friend. Not because she wants to marry the bosom friend, heavens, no! but because he kissed her and she didn't know what else to do. There is a wild ride in a blazing automobile while the audience holds its breath in suspense. Then total darkness. Next scene shows the girl out looking for another man, having left the last one dying under his overturned car.

The audience does not know why, but it pities this poor little wondering She. This is the way with people, common people with their emotions working, when they watch a play on the stage, or even the picture of a play on a screen. They are all for the girl with the golden hair, who stares with speaking eyes and staggers hungry and cold through the snow. It does not matter what she has done. They hope she'll land by the fire with her head on the right man's shoulder.

But John always took his morals with him when he went abroad, and he was worried.

"I say," he whispered to Olive; "that girl won't do. Why don't she stay put? Why in thunder doesn't she marry one of 'em, and have done with it?"

"Because, John dear, she wants them all to love her," answered Olive, beginning to snigger. "Besides, don't you see they couldn't finish the reel if she made up her mind at once?"

"Well, she's setting a confounded bad example to the girls here," he growled, looking round gravely concerned at the maidens who were suffering and sympathising with the heroine.

"Oh," giggled Olive, "won't you ever quit gnawing your Ten Commandments for a minute, John, and just enjoy something because it's entertaining?"

"It's entertaining, all right: that's the mischief of it, but——"

Fortunately, the "right man" got a hunch in the next scene that the girl was dying in the snow just outside his window, and he went out and rescued her and married her before she thawed; one might have said just to get her out of the way of the rest of mankind.

"I wouldn't have done it!" John snorted, as the screen faded and the lights came on.

"Not even if it had been me?" Olive suggested.

"It couldn't have been you," he answered, making way for her through the crowd to the door.

One hour later they were on the train, slipping up through the hills to Valhalla. They were in the day coach, where it didn't matter, so Olive laid her head upon John's shoulder, and let one of her hands drift away in a dream with one of John's hands.

"I'm glad the weather has cleared," he said, looking through the window at the cold, starlit night.

"John!"

"Yes, beloved," drawing her closer to him.

"I told you that day we were married that you couldn't trust me. I warned you, John," she whispered.

"I remember. I'm only trusting myself, not you, dear, not yet. But soon now!" he answered, pressing her hand to his heart.

"Oh, not soon," she sobbed. "You can't ever. Some day I shall drag our love in the mire, John. It's the way I'm made."

"The one thing which cannot be dragged in the mire is true love, Olive. The more you deface it, the fairer it shines. It can make of sorrow the bread of life. Its indulgence is sacrifice. Its prominence

is self-effacement. Nothing can change or diminish love. It thrives upon injustice, blooms above the death of all hopes and even happiness, for it cannot die. That's what immortality is—love!"

She listened in awe. She had a new sense of her husband. He encompassed her with his will. He wrapped her in this shining garment of his love, and she was terrified. For she could not think in these terms of love. And she did not want to love so, and she prayed to be delivered from such a love and such a man. Still, she knew that she was glad to be there beside him going home with him.

So are women made, of all contradictions, and to so little purpose of their own, with no sustaining strength in themselves to accomplish the liberty of their own souls. Yet ever rebellious, ever striving against their fate. It all came from having been made from the rib of a man, and not from original dust. They are sidekin to him, and nothing that they can do, or provoke men to do, will change that.

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When Mrs. Arms came home the next morning, she found the house swept and garnished like the heart of a good woman, who has made the best of

everything and blown upon the coals upon her altar to furnish the right warmth and glow for all homely virtues. There was an odour of cleanliness so grateful to the nostrils of an old housewife who had long since proved that this virtue is indeed next to godliness, and who knew that it could not be obtained without the plentiful use of soap and water and furniture polish. The old threadbare rug in the parlour lay upon the floor like brown and yellow autumn leaves dried in the sun after a drenching rain. The windows glistened like the spectacles of an elegant old lady who is looking through them at the same old town, but with renewed interest. Even the dish cloths in the kitchen were immaculate. The pie pans on the shelf showed that they had been scrubbed, the tea set, canister, butter dish, and water pitcher on the sideboard shone like silver moonlight in the darkened dining-room.

Olive herself was a kind of prim miracle with her hair so smoothly braided, and her face so pinkly fair, and her slender figure almost, but not quite, concealed in one of Mother's white aprons.

The old lady was delighted beyond words as she moved from one room to another with her spectacles

elevated like a two-eyed tiara on top of her head. There are some things which even the blind can see without the aid of magnifying glasses. John was so proud that he was unbearably conceited. One might have inferred from the satisfied grin upon his face that he had done all this. And in his secret soul he did not doubt that he had.

But Olive was silent, not meek, just wordless, merely studying that expression upon John's face with cool attention.

"Olive, my child, it is wonderful. I couldn't have done it so well myself, everything, and kept the house like this!" exclaimed Mrs. Arms, embracing her daughter-in-law.

"You ought to be proud of your wife, John," she added, looking over Olive's shoulder at her son.

"I am. I'm so proud I can hardly keep both feet on the floor," he answered with a laugh.

But Olive stared at him soberly.

"He's only proud of having made me do it," she thought to herself.

And the old lady never knew that the bread, the cake, the cold fowl, and the salad they had that day for lunch were prepared to keep John alive until she

should return, by a wife who had made up her mind to desert him.

Since she could do so well in this business, he had a plan to propose.

"What's the use of having 'Cindy back at all?" he demanded.

"But, John, it's one thing to do all the work of this house for two weeks, and a very different thing to do it all the time!" his mother objected.

"Work is a very good thing, Mother; the best remedy in the world for all the troubles in the world. Look at Olive: did you ever see her looking better, fairer, sweeter—or half so becoming to herself?"

They both took Olive in, John with smiling eyes, Mrs. Arms with evident anxiety. The young wife suddenly concealed herself as if she dropped a curtain somewhere within and retired behind it either to pray or to lift her hands rebelliously, vowing something which she called upon high heaven to witness.

"Not since you have been away has she complained of being bored," he went on, reaching over to pat Olive's shoulder. "She's a howling success, that's what my wife is."

"It will make no difference at all in my plans, Mother, whether we have a cook or not," said the "howling success," carefully addressing Mother and not John.

She had "plans," then! He was not so inattentive to that term as he appeared to be.

"Very well, then; we'll try it for a month," agreed the old lady. "'Cindy is a trial. She will leave the top off the soda can, and she is not really neat. But I warn you, John, if Olive begins to look peaked or worried, we'll make a change at once."

So it was settled, and the Arms house began to revolve upon its diurnal axes, as if the angels greased them, which the angels did not do. Olive insisted upon doing the kitchen work, and she did the worst of it with suspicious thoroughness. She appeared to be in her element when she cleaned out the stove. She managed to be engaged in this soot-smearing duty at the hour when John returned from the store in the afternoon. She made of herself a little ash can wife and refused to be kissed, lest he might soil himself, which he was eagerly willing to do in so good a cause. Also, she did not dress for dinner. She said she did not have time, that everything

would be cold, not fit to eat, if she delayed to clean up. So she came to the table looking as much like a cook as she could. And then she did not eat much, because she said it took her appetite to prepare the food. She put the kitchen in order and would not allow John to wipe the dishes, though he was quite willing, because she said she preferred to do everything herself. Then she thought she would go upstairs to bed. She was tired. Would they excuse her? This from the parlour door as she passed through the hall from the kitchen.

It was enough to move the heart of a stone, and Mrs. Arms was moved deeply.

"John, this won't do! That child is making a drudge of herself!" she exclaimed one evening as they sat alone by the fire.

He did not answer. He was smoking his pipe and auditing his books, as he had done at night before his marriage.

"I shall send for 'Cindy to-morrow," she announced, in a tone which meant that she would not be contradicted.

He really wished she would. But he did not want to say so. It was too much like admitting that he

had made a mistake. But he was anxious about Olive. She certainly was not like herself.

No woman ever is after her husband actually succeeds in adjusting her to his own ideas of what a wife should be. And no man would ever choose such a woman if she was in that state of silence and submission before he married her. But this is one thing you cannot teach a man. He will object to the very qualities in his wife which attracted him to her as a girl. If he has his own way with her he will put her in flat-heeled shoes, though he was in love with her little French slippers. He says to her that he wonders why she fusses up her hair so, when it was these same vagrant curls he noticed the first time he saw her. And why in thunderation doesn't she get sensible clothes, when, in fact, the airy, flimsy, foolish frock she wore once when he came to call, a sweet little lace-trimmed cloud hint she gave him then of how winged and happy she was in her heart to him. So he reduces his wife to the prose of his own masculine mind, and then spends the rest of his days vaguely in need of that girl she was before he changed her into this plain woman who wears broad-toed shoes, smooths her hair back, and

clothes herself in just sensible frocks that are as ugly as hell. Lord! why doesn't she do something to make herself attractive? It comes to that! Meanwhile the poor thing is doing everything she can to conform to what he said he wanted, considering his wishes and his comfort in every act of her life, and even in her prayers.

The truth of the whole business is jealousy. The man knows that the same feminine enchantments, enhanced by feminine arts of toilet, would also attract other men to her as he was attracted. Now that she is *his* wife, he will not tolerate that. Therefore he cheats himself out of the adorable girl she was in order that no other man may discover that she might, could, or would be adorable. And he does all this without ever admitting to himself why he does it. Perfectly innocent of his ugly, flat-footed, plain clothes wife!

Mammon may be the root of all evil. I do not say it is not. But if you want to study the growth and development of the green bay tree of all meanness, observe the manifestation of jealousy in the lives of men. It is hardy, deadly, and you cannot get rid of it without killing the victim.

John was not as bad as all this, and Olive was not so good as all this; but she had got as far as the flat shoes, the only kind to be had in Valhalla, and as far as the very "simple" blue serge frock which she and Mrs. Arms made between them. They had "a time," as the old lady expressed it, taking up the darts, which did not really matter, since the thing would have looked as well or as bad without any darts at all, it was so warped to ugliness. Olive was secretly saving the things Madame had made and sent to her.

One bright afternoon early in December she started for the grocery store. She wore "the dress" beneath her last winter's coat, and she wore her last winter's hat, and she carried a market basket on her arm, with a long list of things in her purse which would be needed for the Christmas fruit cake.

As she walked along the Avenue, she saw Mrs. Bigsby some distance ahead, thrillingly dressed as usual, with a white fur collar laid opulently over the back of her new velvet coat, and a bunch of tittering artificial flowers pinned upon her white muff. She was fairly crimping the ground as she pranced. Olive lagged. She did not want to catch

up with "that woman." She did not know why she thought of her as "that woman." It might have been the white furs, or it might have been some sad growth of grace in herself. She only knew that she was unhappy and that she wished to be alone with her sorrow.

The emissaries of the world always appear when the tired good of you is craving a strong drink of coffee. Doubtless they will be in Paradise, too, dangerous stronger spirits with flaming topknots and wider wings. At this moment Olive heard a roar behind her, not the gargling motor of a "flivver," but the satin smooth thunder of a high-powered car. The next instant a magnificent midnight blue limousine, with a silver monogram embossed upon its side and an embossed gentleman lolling inside, passed her.

"Dickie!" she screamed, and then held her breath in horror lest he should have heard her. Oh, heavens! suppose he had seen her, recognised her in these old last winter's *rags*!

She leaned against the palings, she was so faint from the shock, not of seeing Dickie, though that was enough, but for fear Dickie had seen her in these

old things. Eve could not have been more mortified at the chance of meeting one of the flaming sword angels before she exchanged her innocence for her first evening gown.

The girl stood watching the car until it disappeared. She knew she had seen Blake, but what did Blake mean by coming to Valhalla? Atlanta was only fifty miles distant, and sometimes tourists from that place did pass through the town in pleasant summer weather, but the sight of Blake in mid-winter flying through was like seeing a ghost. She thought he was in New York. Aunt Sarah had given her that information in the only letter she had had from her. Why had he returned? Olive Thurston had been the attraction for him in Atlanta, and now there was no Olive Thurston.

She was pale to the lips. She knew how the dead felt who could not rise from the dust of themselves. All the thoughts which she tried not to think cried out against this fate. All the gay scenes she tried not to remember swam like mirages before her vision. And she was here in this hideous little dead town working like a drudge, never, never to escape. She had lost all hope of changing John, and, what

was more to the point, she knew John could never change her, make her into the wife he wanted. She only obeyed with her hands and feet. Her heart was burnt within by a terrible despair. Only death could release her from this awful tragedy she had made of her life. And death—was so far off. She might live for years and years. She might—O God, those “children!” They haunted her. Sometimes they swarmed in through the kitchen door, never just one, but John’s many sons and daughters. And they looked at her with begging eyes. She stood there with the last rags of the red winter sun spread like a fan over her, with the bare branches of the trees making a web of shadows about her feet, her heart like lead in her bosom.

Suddenly she realised that some one was screaming behind her. She looked back and saw Mrs. Ripley flying up the Avenue, bareheaded, with her arms waving like an old fat duck’s wings. What was the woman shrieking? What were all those people yelling and gesticulating about as they ran into the Avenue?

“Fire!”

“Fire!”

“Fire! Fire! F-I-R-E!”—the most horrific word, the most despairing word that can be heard in a town of old kindling wood houses with no means to fight the arch enemy of destruction.

The sun had dropped down upon the roof of the old Arms mansion. It bobbed up and down, a blazing yellow ball.

She saw that as she turned and began to run back. Fear lent wings to her feet.

As she burst in through the front door and started up the stairs, she saw Mrs. Arms sitting before the fire in the parlour, placidly knitting.

“What is all this fuss, Olive?” she called after her.

“The house is on fire!” answered Olive from the hall above.

She seized a fire extinguisher which John kept there. It was frightfully heavy, but she did not know that as she raced with it up the attic stairs.

In another moment she had climbed the ladder to the man-hole in the roof.

The next moment the crowd below saw a slim dark figure running swiftly down the gradually sloping roof to that blazing ball of fire which was already stretching up into an exclamation point of destruction.

There was a loud report followed by a black and green column of smoke.

Olive stood staring at the little charred hole in the shingles. She was just in time. Then she turned and walked back toward the high coronet in the front of the house which always conceals the wide, nearly flat roof of the old ante-bellum mansion.

She heard the murmur of voices below. She knew that the crowd was scattering, mostly women and children; that Mrs. Ripley and Mrs. Bray were speaking in the high treble of feminine excitement to Mother on the veranda, and she knew that they thought she was on her way back through the attic.

But she was not. She stood concealed from them behind the cornice. She could see the square between the branches of the naked trees. She saw John rush out of the store. He was running toward the Avenue.

She walked deliberately to the edge of the roof, still hidden by the coronet above the veranda. She looked down, just once, and closed her eyes. It was far, fatally far to the ground below. She stood there, swaying gently, something terrible dragging her forward. Was it the dizzy height, was it some

anguish in her mind? She did not know. She felt the beads of perspiration chilling upon her brow. Her limbs were freezing. Then as if from a great distance she heard·

“Olive!”

But she could not answer.

“Olive, wait! I’m coming!”

John’s voice. Very strange it sounded in her ears, as if he meant to steady her. But, O God! she could not wait, and she did not want John to come. She heard footsteps behind her, many feet.

She was falling, utter peace in a black night of despair.

When she opened her eyes after ages and ages, she looked into John’s face. She was lying upon her bed; Mother was moving softly round on the other side with the camphor bottle and a handkerchief in her hands.

She closed her eyes, and felt the tears creep through.

“You are all right, darling,” she heard Mother say.

“And the bravest woman in the world. Don’t cry, my sweet,” whispered John. Then she heard

Mrs. Arms go out. They were alone together.

"John," she said, looking up at him, "please go. I want to think."

"But I can't leave you now, dear," he protested, kissing her.

"You must. I want to think, John!" she cried, shivering beneath his warm lips.

Now she was alone in the dark, and she could not think. But she knew, oh! she knew that she could not go on. It was as if she had been led upon a high place and had seen the kingdoms of the world from that roof. Why had she not done what she wanted to do in the anguish of her despair?

She was weeping wildly when Mrs. Arms again entered the room, stood looking down at her with a candle in her hand.

"Mother!" cried the girl frantically, "please go! I want to think, by myself. I *must* be by myself!"

The old lady went back downstairs, set the candle upon the parlour table, and glared at her son.

"John, there's something wrong with Olive!" as if she accused him.

"It's just the shock; she'll be all right in the morning," he answered hopefully.

"No, it isn't just the shock. And she won't be all right in the morning. That child's got something on her mind, John."

He thought as much himself. He was very miserable.

"And it's *you!*" exclaimed his mother. "You've been too hard on Olive. You just haven't got any sense about women, John."

It was no time to argue this point. Perhaps he had been a little exacting, he thought, staring into the fire.

"I shouldn't be surprised if she did something desperate. And it's your fault, John; you can't train a woman as if she was a *horse!*"

She sniffed as she took up the candle and went out to the kitchen.

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It was ten o'clock on the fifteenth of December. To be exact, one week after Olive had put out the fire on the roof of the Arms mansion.

Mrs. Thurston was seated at her desk writing notes. It was a little teakwood toy desk that she had picked up somewhere in her travels and she was proud of it. So she kept it in the drawing-room.

She had just been talking to Dickie Blake over the 'phone. She wondered what had brought him South again during the winter when there was no golf, no roads for motoring, and no Olive to flirt with.

She always sighed when she thought of Olive, as one sighs at the memory of the last grave in the family lot at the cemetery. Olive was not even buried in the family lot. She had gone off and buried herself in a misalliance with a common clodhopper.

Well, that was not her fault, she reflected grimly. She had made every effort possible to keep the girl from making such a fool of herself. When Richard came home from Liverpool she had told him all about it, more than she could tell in her letters. She had cleared her skirts of the whole affair.

"She was simply infatuated with that man. I can't understand it," she said, as they sat together on that first evening of his arrival.

"Love, my dear, is a damn smart little rogue. And nobody can understand him!" her husband replied, twiddling his fingers.

"But Olive! How could she, the way she has been brought up? The opportunities she's had to

make brilliant marriages! Why, Dickie Blake was crazy about her!"

Thurston snorted. He always snorted when Blake's name was mentioned if he was where he could snort without attracting attention.

Mrs. Thurston was relieved that he took this revelation of his niece's folly so coolly, but she did not see how he could be so callous. She had grieved terribly for Olive, though of course she could do nothing for a girl who had simply thrown herself away. She was glad Olive did not write. She had the decency to keep her unhappiness to herself. For she did not doubt she was perfectly miserable. The social season promised to be unusually gay. Not that she cared for gaiety at her age, still one must keep in the swim. And it was better to leave the dead past to bury its dead—which is the only scripture society knows how to live up to literally.

If one is accomplished in the fashionable clerical work of answering notes, accepting and refusing invitations, one may write them and keep up a train of obituary reflections at the same time about vanished relatives; and Mrs. Thurston had written

half a dozen notes since that talk with Dickie over the 'phone an hour since reminded her of poor Olive.

"It's a nuisance having to ask him to dinner," she complained out loud. For she had done that. And there was no reason in the world now why she should be bothered with Blake. He was and always had been a bore.

"I suppose he'll take us to the theatre afterward, though. He certainly does pay his debts—— There's the postman now!" she exclaimed, rising hurriedly with the letters as she heard the door bell ring. She hoped Thompson would remember to come for them. What on earth was happening! The postman appeared to be making an awful racket. She could hear James and the maid exclaiming about something.

She was staring at the drawing-room door when it was flung open by James with a flourish.

"Olive!"

"The very same!" cried that young person, precipitating herself upon the exalted satin bosom of her "dear Auntie."

"Why, where'd you come from?" gasped Mrs. Thurston.

“From the back woods of Paradise, dear. Don’t I look it?”

Mrs. Thurston thought she did as she held her at arm’s length and considered her, but she did not say so. Olive was pale; or was she merely fairer, with that wild rose colouring instead of the damask flush she remembered? And—well, there was no denying it, the girl was most becomingly dressed. She noticed that with inward relief, even in her excitement.

“I just had to come, I was so homesick to see you and Uncle Richard. He’s back, isn’t he?” exclaimed Olive.

“Yes, landed in New York Saturday. Got home Monday morning.”

“No wounds, no scars of war on him, I suppose?”

“No, only those of financial depression. He says things are perfectly awful over there.”

They looked at each other, and then the older woman made up her mind that she might as well know the worst at once.

“Where’s your husband, Olive?”

“Oh, John——” as if she referred to a handkerchief which she feared she had mislaid.

"Did he come with you?" demanded Mrs. Thurston steadily.

"No, indeed. You don't know John. He's too busy getting—getting rich, you know, Auntie. He's an awful shark about his business. So I just came by my lonesome, you see," she added, with a little catch in her voice.

"Of course we are glad to have you, dear," said Mrs. Thurston, as if there might have been some doubt about that under certain circumstances.

"Well, you must be; for I've come—for ever so long, Auntie, and I want to be very, very gay, have lots of fun and excitement. It's rather quiet in Valhalla, you know."

Mrs. Thurston said dryly that she supposed it was.

"*And* I have some lovely things, Auntie. John insisted upon that. You must come upstairs and see my gowns. Thompson's unpacking now."

"Well," thought Mrs. Thurston as they went up, "if she has clothes, things are not so bad. We can make a proper appearance at once."

Still, she was not quite satisfied in her mind. Olive was merely like her old self, not really her old

self. Something was amiss. She was sure of that as she watched the feverish way Olive the woman mimicked Olive the girl.

She told Richard that she suspected something that night after they returned from the theatre. Blake had dined with them, and, paying his debt promptly, had taken them all to the show. Olive was beautiful, by far the most beautiful woman in any of the boxes. And she had behaved to Blake with a dignity which was most becoming. He did not seem to realise, stared at her worshipfully, that sort of thing. It was disgusting.

"I tell you, Richard, there's something wrong," insisted Mrs. Thurston as she took off her false front and her braid and her minor curls, that night.

"I don't see a thing wrong with the child, Sarah. She talked about her husband for an hour to me, as if he was the demigod every young wife thinks her husband is. Couldn't praise him enough. I think you've exaggerated the whole affair. Shouldn't be surprised from what she tells me that she's done very well for herself, married a fine man."

"You'll see!" answered Mrs. Thurston, in Cassandra tones.

Meanwhile, Olive sat upon the side of her bed wondering at herself. Why had she told all those lies to Aunt Sarah and Uncle Richard? Why had she not admitted the truth at once by saying that she had come home for good, because she could not bear the life John led her, could not endure the dreariness and drudgery, and all the hopeless forever of it? Instead of that, she had boasted, actually boasted to Aunt Sarah of her domestic accomplishments. And instead of telling Uncle Richard how she had suffered for things that were necessary for her comfort, how poor John kept her and would not allow her to spend a penny of her own money, she had praised John to him until the old gentleman grew enthusiastic, and chided her for not bringing John with her, even if it was only for the day. Why, then, didn't she fall upon his neck and tell him the anguishing truth—that she had taken French leave of John and meant never, never to return to him! Oh, it was horrible! She had encompassed herself about with a fortress of lies. She had made John out such a hero that no one could excuse a woman for leaving such a man.

As for Dickie Blake, he was simply awful, ut-

terly shameless. It was true that she had left her husband, but she was a married woman, and she'd thank him to remember that!

"Well, anyhow," she laughed, turning out the light and flinging herself upon the bed, "I won't have to rise at six in the morning to get breakfast. I'll have my own in bed. And I'll not wash dishes or scrub the kitchen floor to-morrow. And we are going to lunch with the Warrens, and we're going to the *matinée* in the afternoon, and somewhere in the evening. And we are going, going, going all the time, and I'm so happy I could shout to be here, *not* there!"

Whereupon she turned over on her pillow and did not sleep, and did weep because she could see John and Mother sitting silent and bereaved by the parlour fire.

However, this was the first night. She would get accustomed to things presently, and forget John. She was determined to forget John.

So far as appearances could prove, she succeeded. She went everywhere. She was the gayest of the gay. And she was "much admired" everywhere she went. She tried not to show how ravenous she

was for compliments when Uncle Richard pinched her cheeks one day and told her that he had heard—he didn't know how true it was, but the rumour was widely circulated in Atlanta—that Mrs. John Arms was far and away the most beautiful woman "out" that winter.

They dined alone that evening, as it happened. Mrs. Thurston, after observing her niece for days, decided to mention something.

"You don't eat anything, Olive. Why don't you eat?"

"Come, that will never do," her uncle chided. "Can't stand up to this day-and-night pace you're going if you mince your feed, Olive."

"I don't seem to care for it," she said with an effort, looking away from her plate as if it was the most distasteful thing she ever saw in her life.

"If you'll excuse me, Auntie, I'll go up and lie down. I'm a bit fagged," she said, rising.

"Well, now, what do you think of that?" demanded Mrs. Thurston, laying down her salad fork and looking at her husband with a mysterious feminine stare.

"Seems to be off her feed," he answered, as if that was no tragedy.

"Well, I think it complicates matters most awfully."

"To what matters do you refer, my dear?"

"Richard," she said, glancing toward the door of the butler's pantry and lowering her voice as if that door had a keyhole ear, "this is the middle of January."

"Yes?"

"Olive has been here a month, and *she has not received a single letter from her husband* that I know!"

"Perhaps they are carrying on a clandestine correspondence," he suggested lightly.

"Don't think you are deceiving *me*, Richard; you know you are anxious. And," she went on, accumulating evidence, "Christmas passed without a message, or an exchange of gifts, or a visit from John Arms, who is only fifty miles away."

"My dear, don't meddle. The balance of many a marriage has been destroyed by the poking fingers of old people."

"Am I meddling?" she fired back indignantly. "Don't I go night and day, until my tongue hangs out, trying to give her all the excitement and whatever it is she wants?"

"Keep it up."

"It's all very well for you to say that, but you'd think differently if you saw how things are going."

"How are they going?"

"Well, Dickie Blake hangs about Olive everywhere all the time. People will be gossiping presently, if they are not already at it."

"Does she encourage him?" he asked, frowning.

"I can't say that she does. No, she tries to ignore him. She never dances with him, never dances at all, in fact."

"And right she is; shows she has a proper sense of how a married woman should behave when she is away from her husband."

"But it isn't like Olive to be proper and——"

"Marriage often improves a woman's idea of propriety, thank God!"

"Richard, you are only fencing. You know and I know that Olive has left her husband."

"My dear, I do not know anything of the kind. What I do know is that many a woman would leave her husband if nature did not bind her closer to him than the wedding ceremony. Just sit steady in the

middle of the boat and wait. Now will you ring for the coffee?"

While these confidences were exchanged between the old people Olive paced the floor of her room like a tragic young sorrow.

"O God! what must I do, what must I do!" she whispered, clasping her hands over her head in a fine frenzy.

"How can I bear this?" she moaned, exhausted at last. Falling upon her knees beside the bed, she flung her arms across it like broken wings, and buried her face.

If you are a woman, it is never wise to jump out of the frying pan into the fire. A man may do it, get away, and even take the frying pan with him. But a woman cannot. Nature is against her. It is best to stay in the pan and cool it with your tears.

Olive had progressed during these weeks beyond tears. The anguish and suspense, which slowly gave place to a frightful certainty, were too deep for tears. She could not suffer, and suffer, she thought, as she rose from her knees and went to repair the damages of such acute secret suffering at her dressing table.

She rubbed her cheeks in vain. They would not flame. Her face was pale as moonlight, and it wore that sad, distant radiance of the moon. Well, then, rouge it must be. She would not go out in the world looking like a ghost. She put it on with a lavish hand. She poked out her lips and reddened them until they glowed. She could do nothing to her eyes, which were wide and dark with all despair. Still, she knew the effect was splendid as she threw her opera cloak over her arm and trailed downstairs where Dickie and Mrs. Thurston were waiting for her.

They were going to the Drama League performance which was to be given at the Driving Club.

She felt Dickie's searching gaze, merely felt it, for she had learned not to return it; and she was glad that she could not change colour, since she had put on so much colour like a mask.

"Have a good time, my dear," said Uncle Richard, patting her shoulder. Why did Uncle Richard speak so tenderly, as if he knew? Well, nobody should know or suspect!

"Oh, I always do have the loveliest time," she laughed. "I'm perfectly happy, you know."

He did not know, he was not sure, his brooding eyes told her, as Dickie held the cloak for her to slip into.

"You are all snow and roses to-night, Olive, stunning," he whispered.

"Olive, hurry, or we shall be late," called Mrs. Thurston from the door.

While Dickie was putting the old lady in the car and pulling up the rug, they both heard Olive exclaim, as if she suppressed a scream.

"What is it? What's the matter?" asked Blake, turning round.

"Oh, I thought I saw somebody over there—in—in the shadows," gasped the girl, hurrying into the car.

"My goodness, Olive, you are nervous!" exclaimed her aunt impatiently. "Why shouldn't you see somebody? This town's full of people."

"Yes," laughed Blake, jumping in, "you are not in Valhalla Cemetery for heroes slain in battle. Lots of real live people here. Must get used to seeing 'em on the streets."

Still she trembled, and then she laughed, a little explosive giggle, as she drew nearer the fat warmth of Mrs. Thurston's ample person.

Her companions were both conscious of a lighting change in her, a lift of the spirits. And never had the beautiful Mrs. Arms been so lovely, so charming, and withal so sedate as she was that evening.

They were in the ballroom after the performance, watching the dance.

Chan Wilton, an old beau, came up, seated himself on the other side of Mrs. Thurston.

"Your niece is the handsomest woman in the room," he whispered gallantly.

"Olive is a very good-looking girl," returned the old lady, wondering what on earth the very good-looking girl meant by stinging and stabbing every man who approached her with merciless wit.

"And she knows how to take care of herself. Look at Blake. He's bleeding from a dozen wounds. Heard her tell him just now that she despised, positively despised a man who didn't earn his own living. Fancy saying that to a fellow who couldn't earn a penny to save his life!"

"Mr. Blake is an old friend of the family. Olive's known him for years," answered Mrs. Thurston, making an effort to cover the situation.

“So? Well, it’s my opinion that he doesn’t know Mrs. Arms at all. She’s passed out of his knowledge. Women do that sometimes, you know.”

“I suppose so”—with her mind on something else. She was wondering if the perverse little baggage had passed out of her knowledge, too.

The next afternoon the Bridge Whist Club met with Mrs. Thurston. The game was over, the little company of women and girls were scattered about the drawing-room having tea. Every one was discussing the game, what they could have done if they had had such and such a hand, or if so and so hadn’t played the kind of hand she did play.

“Did you see that old cat renege?” from Mrs. Warren in a whisper to Olive, with whom she was seated near the window.

“I didn’t notice,” said Olive tactfully.

“Well, she did; she always does. Bless me, here’s Mr. Blake!”

“Just in time!” said that gentleman, bowing himself in all directions as he advanced toward the tea table.

“Don’t tell me there’s nothing left for a hungry dog!” he said, addressing Mrs. Thurston.

"How will you have your tea, Dickie?" she asked, not pleased, but willing to feed him.

"Strong, dear lady, very strong. I'm a wreck; had a frightful experience last night after I left you!" he announced, sweeping the room with a provocative grin.

"What happened?"

"—Did you lose a lot of money playing poker?"

"—Were you arrested? Some of our best people are since the——"

"—Oh, let him tell it in his own thrilling way. Begin, Mr. Blake."

All this in a chorus from the ladies, while Olive endeavoured to keep her companion's attention, she alone of the company failing to acclaim the entrance of the hero.

"I will; I'm all puffed up with it; if you'll only give me a chance to relate it," he answered, fixing his eyes upon Olive, who continued to talk in an undertone.

"Listen, he's going to give us a thrill."

"Well, it was rather startling," Blake went on. "After I left you and Mrs. Arms, I stopped at a little place to—take something——"

"Yes, we know about those little places!"

"—It was late, and I decided to walk back to the hotel; took a short cut through—well, I think it must have been an alley. Anyhow, it was very dark in there——"

"Oh, it's going to be a desperate encounter!"

"—Suddenly a man stepped out in front of me——"

"A robber! I told you so."

"—That's exactly what he was. I couldn't see his face, it was so dark; but he stood there before me so close I could feel him. I was not armed, you see, and I admit I was pretty well stirred up. He was so deliberate. Never met a footpad like him."

"This suspense is awful! What did you do, Mr. Blake?"

"Why, I frightened him away. Took nerve, I can tell you. I said, I fairly hissed, 'Begone! you ruffian, or I'll shoot spots all over you!' And believe me, he went, disappeared like that!" blowing his breath.

"Without robbing you?"

"Certainly. You see, I frightened him."

A peal of laughter, merry and at the same time

tinkling with scorn, broke the heroic silence. It was Olive. She was clapping her hands, in a paroxysm of mirth, as she stared at Blake.

"Oh, Dickie," she gasped, "maybe he was not after your wallet. Maybe he was after your life. And when he saw, considered what a—what a harmless creature you are—he vanished like that!"—puffing out her cheeks and blowing in imitation.

Blake flushed furiously. How could she have guessed so nearly what had really happened? In fact, he had met a man, a fearfully tall man, and a wide one, in the darkened street, and he had stood for the Lord only knew how long with his hands up, waiting to be robbed, praying to be robbed and have done with it. Then the thief, or whatever he was, laughed in his face. "You damn coward, you are not worth killing!" and had indeed vanished, "like that."

"You ought to have a guard, Mr. Blake, an important man like you!"

"Yes, you might be carried off and held for a ransom."

"Well, I'll think of it," said Blake, comforted that Olive's devilish prescience was not telepathic

and that he had scored with the other ladies at least.

But about Olive. He must do something. He was tired of dangling. He would bring things to an issue at the first opportunity. He thought he knew his ground, and it was all to the good for him. The girl had evidently left her husband, as he knew she would. She was only playing him, so as not to be too easy. He was up to a game like that himself. But, by George! she was stunning. Marriage, he had observed often, added a forbidding charm to a woman. He wanted her more than he ever had when she was a girl and free to entangle him in the bonds of wedlock. No bonds like that now. And no alimony later. A man in his position had to think in terms of ultimate alimony if he married. It would be smoother sailing. No wedding, no divorce, no damages. Olive had lost. And he had won, practically. He had only to pick up the stakes; that is, Olive herself. He supposed there would be the deuce of a scandal. But scandal was the spice of life. Society had come to recognise that, and to rejoice in such escapades; furnished excitement.

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One fine morning early in January the old Rip Van Winkle town of Valhalla awakened, sat up, rubbed the dust of half a century from its eyes, and stared.

The object which attracted this stare was a notice written in large script and posted on the door of John Arms's hardware store, which was closed. A crowd of men stood before it with their necks stretched and their heads poked forward as if they could not believe their eyes.

Colonel Ripley saw them from his office in the Court House and came skipping across the Square, throwing his game leg higher than usual in his hurry to get there.

"What's up? John Arms gone into bankruptcy?" he exclaimed, pushing his way through the crowd.

"No, he's just gone crazy, that's all," answered some one.

The Colonel put on his glasses and read aloud:

WANTED AT ONCE:—Ten carpenters, eight stone masons, two civil engineers, and fifty day labourers. Report to John Arms to-day before twelve o'clock.

(Signed) JOHN ARMS.

“Well,” shouted the Colonel, facing the men, “by cracky! what are we standing here for? Why don’t we report?”

“Reckon he’s in earnest?” asked a man who wore a mason’s apron.

“That’s what he’s been all his life. Cut his teeth in earnest when he was a baby. Wouldn’t let his Ma run her finger in his mouth to feel his gums then. Fought every boy in this town in dead earnest soon as he was old enough to fight. Went to work in earnest after his Pa failed that last time and he had to come home from college to make the living. Been in earnest ever since. Never knew him to do but one frisky thing, that was to marry. And if you ask me, I believe that’s why he’s so much more in earnest now. Got to make up for that frolic.” The Colonel laughed and the crowd laughed with him.

“You may stand around here if you like, gentlemen,” he added over his shoulder as he hopped off; “but I’m on my way to the Foundry to apply for the position of attorney to represent the darned thing. Always knew John would fetch a surge some day, and take hold. Now he’s done it, and I’m going to get in on the ground floor.”

This was the beginning of a tremendous activity in Valhalla. Cotton sold for six cents a pound during the autumn of 1914. The poor were desperately poor. Men were glad of a chance to earn anything. And John Arms had more applications for work than he could fill. Still he paid a fair wage. And it was said of him that he personally saw to it that every man put in full time and did his stint.

The old Foundry was torn down, and immediately the walls of it began to rise again. Machinery was installed in the ore beds. Scrapers scraped, and fifty teams hauled stone, lumber, and chaos generally back and forth.

No one knew where Arms got the money for this stupendous enterprise. He gave no confidences. But since he never had "talked," they accepted his reticence as natural. The only information they had about the opening of the Foundry was from a story published in one of the Atlanta papers with headlines on the front page. This was an exceedingly flattering account, in which John Arms was mentioned as a "young captain of industry," and the Iron Foundry was exploited as probably the beginning of a "great business." John was

himself astonished at this publicity, for he had never given out his plans. Still, he was gratified and encouraged.

At once the people of Valhalla began to look up to him as a "prominent citizen." Two things are essential to fame: first, the public must recognise your ability. Your neighbours never do until then. Second, if you wish to convince the community, whether that is a village, a city, or the whole country, that you are a person of distinction, be ruthless, and envelop your ruthlessness in silence.

John had become ruthless. He collected bills from men who never expected to pay, as if he did not care any longer for a goodwill which depended upon credit. He was mercilessly exacting as an overseer at the Foundry. He went to Atlanta twice and often three times a week. And he was so detached in his manner from the people of Valhalla that Old Jim Grimes was heard to say one day:

"To see John Arms strutting around here in his fine clothes now, you wouldn't think I made his shoes out of rawhide leather and put a brass band on the toe to keep him from kicking 'em out when he was a boy, now would you?"

Nobody would, and everybody said so. It was as if he looked up at a lofty monument with an exaggerated pose, and said:

“I can recollect when that thing wasn’t nothing but a rock out here in the granite quarry.”

These are the first evidences of a man’s fame, when his neighbours begin to remind one another of the time when he wore ragged breeches and went barefooted.

From all these circumstances you will infer that John had come far and changed much since that day in December when he went home in the evening to learn from his mother that Olive had gone, and that she had taken “all her things except the little blue frock.”

“She told me good-bye, John, and said she was going home. That’s all. Called it ‘home,’” explained the old lady with quivering lips.

He had made no reply, simply stood for a long time staring at her. But she noticed then that it was not the gaze of a beaten man.

They took up their old silent life together as if there never had been an Olive in the house. Every evening John worked upon his ledgers by the par-

lour fire. Only he had more ledgers and larger ones, and many, many bills to reckon up, and many letters to write. She always left him when she returned, still busy among these papers with the green shade over his eyes, which served the double purpose of concealing from her the deepening frown upon his forehead. She wondered what he was doing, how he came by the money with which to build and equip the Foundry. But she was not the woman to meddle in a man's affairs. And John was not the man to confide them. He never mentioned Olive's name. And Mrs. Arms dared not mention it.

There was no way to defeat some men. They are the ones who die fighting upon the red battle lines of war, victorious in death. They are the ragged remnant of conquered armies who return home invincible to bring a new civilisation and a better one out of the ashes of defeat. They are always pioneers, the patriots of immortal courage whose country is To-morrow. They reclaim the waste places, build all the cities, establish all governments, and make all histories.

Over and above the other kind of men in the South, it is peopled with this kind. Soldiers of for-

tune who live and die in poverty and who manage to acquire a kind of invisible wealth which sustains them magnificently in that condition. They are the very will of God to do what they believe. And you can no more change that than you can change the Order of Things.

John Arms belonged to this class. He did not know it, but the first thirty years of his life had been spent in organising himself and his faculties into a kind of force to do the thing he chose to do. Now the time had come. And until that hour struck he did not know what he was for.

The fact that his wife had left him acted like an explosion. He was shocked into facing the eminence of defeat. And being capable of that larger comprehension of manhood, he did not miss the point in the situation. He left Olive as a mere detail, and set himself to prove his own quality. There could be no better way to prove her error. But this was not in his mind. He had come to that place reached in every man's life when he must stake all he is and all he has upon himself. And having a great opinion of John Arms, it was a fair-sized stake. He knew now that he must win or

fail, and that since Olive had thrown herself in the balance against him, the only wise thing to do was to risk all.

Shortly after her departure he went to Atlanta and borrowed ten thousand dollars. He mortgaged everything he had, his home, a thousand acres of land which included the iron ore fields and the Foundry, to obtain this sum. This was the time to obtain labour, building materials, and machinery at the lowest possible prices. He figured that since the armies of Europe were destroying bridges, railroads, and everything else made of iron and steel; that since their labour was drafted either to fight or to manufacture ammunitions, and not the material with which these essentials of commerce and civilisation must be replaced, that so soon as the war was over there would be an overwhelming demand for iron and steel. He gambled on that. And to finance his gambling he opened a mica mine to furnish mica for ammunitions. He knew that this would lose its value in the market the minute peace was declared. Meanwhile, the mica was extremely valuable and from the first he would be able to make that business pay the interest on his mortgages.

So, while Valhalla followed the radiant trail of Mrs. John Arms's social triumphs in Atlanta, Mr. John Arms was tearing up the face of the earth upon the outskirts of Valhalla making a trail of his own.

"I see by the papers that John's wife is visiting her rich kin in Atlanta," was the way Mrs. Ripley put it one day to John's mother when they met for "The Placid Hour."

"Yes, Olive needs a rest," answered Mrs. Arms.

"Well, she don't seem to be resting much. She's either been or she's going to a ball or a reception or dinner every day and every night, according to the society column," returned Mrs. Ripley, watching her victim with avid curiosity.

"Olive has many friends in Atlanta. Of course they ask her to everything. John's so glad she's enjoying herself."

"When's she coming home?"

Heaven only knew if she would ever come home! It was already the middle of January. But Mrs. Arms made no such admission.

"We hope she will stay a long time. John's anxious for Olive to have a little change. And he's

glad for her to be there while he's so busy here," she answered, as coolly as if she had been Ananias instead of a truthful woman.

"I suppose John sees her when he goes to Atlanta?"

"Oh, yes, of course he does," she said, making haste to put on her wraps and get away before she should be obliged to perjure her soul with another lie. For she knew that John had had no communication with his wife since the day she left Valhalla.

That night she showed the old signs of restlessness. While John worked on his books, she flurried in and out, and she could not settle herself at her knitting.

He recognised the weather signs of her discontent.

"What is it, Mother?" he asked presently, without looking up.

"It's very lonely here without Olive, John," she said, making no attempt to conceal her mind.

"Is it?" he said, in a way which implied that he was thinking of something else.

"You ought to bring Olive home, John," she began again after a pause.

"She'll come when she gets ready, Mother."

"But she's your wife, my son; you ought to take better care of her. She's so young and inexperienced."

"Not in the game she's playing now, Mother."

"She may be sick for all you know, John."

"Not a bit of it! She's as healthy as a heathen!" he said, laughing. She sighed, and feared John was becoming a hard man. She was sorry for him; yes, but her sympathy, her real womanly feeling of compassion and understanding, was with Olive. It was one thing to be a man's mother, and a more trying thing to be his wife. She thought she was fortunate in being John's mother, and that Olive was unfortunate in being his wife. She never associated misfortune with John. She had a conviction that he was too strong for misfortune to stick to him. It did stick, was always sticking to women.

"You ought to do something about this, John. You should write to Olive," she began again after a long silence.

"What for? I see her every time I go to Atlanta, two or three times a week," he answered coldly.

"Ah! I'm so glad. Then everything will come

out all right," she said, as she rolled up her knitting and bade him good-night.

She was comforted in her heart and in her soul. She was not accustomed to saying her prayers with a lie to explain to the Almighty, and it seemed that she had told the truth to Mrs. Ripley, after all. For if John saw Olive when he went to Atlanta, things could not be so bad between them. But what, then, did this long separation mean? She drifted off into the uneasy sleep of the aged who trouble themselves to the very grave's edge over the new and strange ways of the young.

We know very little of what is really going on about us. We divine the very smallest part of what takes place in the hearts of men and women, with all our suspicious and clairvoyant scratchings at the door of their invisibleness. The one thing in this world more hidden than God is man. We only see his deeds, hear his cunning speech devised to conceal. And we only behold the tenement in which he lives, but never the man himself. For he is most false even when he would be revealing, and often most revealing when he would deceive. But when you add all you know of him and subtract that from

what you do not know, the remainder is the greater part.

Here was Valhalla believing that Olive was only "visiting her rich kin" in Atlanta. And firmly convinced that John himself was spending his wife's money to develop his business. There was Mrs. Arms upstairs sleeping upon the comfort that John saw Olive two or three times a week, and that everything was all right. And there was Mrs. Ripley sitting before the bedroom fire telling the Colonel Mary Arms told her that John had sent Olive home to her folks so he'd have more time for his work, and that he meant to keep her there until the Foundry was built, and that he actually wanted her to run around the way she did to balls and things—which in her opinion was very strange, considering the decent way John had lived himself. And there was Anna Berry playing the *Maiden's Prayer* upon her old tin pan piano and wondering if John knew what she had known from the beginning, that his wife did not love him. And there was Mrs. Bigsby hugging herself in a pink silk kimono, and giggling because she knew that John Arms's wife was about to get a divorce from him. And there was Dickie

Blake making plans according to what he knew, and there was Mr. and Mrs. Thurston getting a lot of spurious information composed entirely of facts. And there was Olive weeping upon her pillow after the ball was over and the streets were quiet, when she should have been sleeping, because she could see Anna Berry sitting by the parlour fire talking in her droning monotone to Mother, with her praying blue eyes always fixed upon John, who would be listening. Finally, here was John pacing the floor with his head sunk upon his breast, with his hands clenched behind his back, and with murder in his heart, nerving himself for just that, when every one thought his whole attention was fixed upon making a fortune. And not one of the whole troop knew a single thing about the very thing they thought they knew everything.

It is a mystery, my masters, this web of life. And if we actually had the spinning of it in our own hands, we should tear the cloth of gold. But we never do, we only think we do. Another hand guides the thread and determines the yards and yards of cloth of gold which we weave, *but never see*.

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John Arms read the society page of the Atlanta papers these days with all the envy of a fashionable woman.

The day after Olive left him he saw this announcement: "Mrs. John Arms is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Thurston." The next day all of the papers announced that "Mrs. Richard Thurston will entertain in honour of her niece, Mrs. John Arms."

After that the news came with every issue. Some one gave a "luncheon for Mrs. Arms"; "The beautiful Mrs. John Arms was a guest in some one's box at the theatre"; and "Mrs. John Arms, celebrated for her beauty, was much admired at the Ravenwood Club Ball." And "Mr. Richard Blake entertains Mr. and Mrs. Thurston and their guest, Mrs. John Arms, at dinner this evening at the Capital City Club."

A hardware merchant in a country village cannot hold his own against such odds as these. Therefore, very early in the game John borrowed ten thousand dollars and became an iron master, with a growing foundry on his hands. Not, mind you, that he admitted the odds, but by way of interpreting himself and proving his mettle.

When the announcement of where Mrs. John Arms would appear next came far ahead, he took the train for Atlanta. Ostensibly he went "on business." And it was business, but of a secret kind. It required him to spend the night in the street until the ball was over, if it was a ball. Olive was escorted back and forth upon these occasions by a man who carried a flaming sword of wrath. If women were as telepathic as we think they are, she should have felt his eyes upon her as she trailed through the parlours of the Georgia Terrace one night in January. She should have known when she sat with Dickie Blake just inside the window that John was just outside studying her every glance, even though he could not hear what they said. He never studied Dickie, for he understood the script of that gentleman's fervid looks only too well.

Once he waited for an hour opposite the Thurston residence on Peachtree Street. When Olive came out with Mrs. Thurston and Blake, he thought she recognised him. This was the night he almost resolved to give up the idea of becoming a wealthy iron master. He decided to kill Blake and accept

the shorter shift of being a murderer instead. This was the night Dickie met his robber. The deed was nearly done. But as John stood before him, read all the craven history of the man's soul in his livid face, he received a sudden light upon the situation. Olive had lived with *him*; a man, she knew. She must know the difference between this fungous fellow and a man. From that moment a certain nameless dread lifted. And it was for this reason that he struck down Dickie's surrendering hands, laughed in his face, turned upon his heels, and left him there in the dark.

He would, he knew, come near to killing Dickie sooner or later, but as one trod upon vermin, not as a man fought another man.

During the first weeks of his pain he had been furious with Olive. He despised her. He could not think of her without experiencing a kind of nausea. But as time wore on, he began to think more sanely of her. At last, being very lonely, and having no one to accuse him, he accused himself. He put himself a little more kindly in her place, permitted himself to comprehend her point of view. After that he was lost, of course. He perceived that he had

been exacting, had gone too hard and too fast in his effort to make her the kind of wife he needed.

This was not all. He saw Olive so often now when she could not possibly know that he was near, and he perceived a change in her, as mysterious as it was pathetic. She was very pale, for the rouge did not deceive him. She was often feverishly gay when surrounded by her friends, but he was always aware of the fact that she wished to escape, that she sought opportunities to be alone as much as she was determined to go everywhere and be in the thick of every brilliant occasion. It was as if two women strove in her frail body. And she was frail. Once he followed her round the gallery of a ballroom, he upon the terrace outside, she making her way to a sheltered corner behind some palms. She flung herself upon the seat, and rested there like a runner who is spent with the race. It was then that he noticed the great difference. A sharpening of the features. Her eyes were larger, blacker, but veiled with some mysterious consciousness as if she were frightened. They were neither the eyes of a maid nor of a wife. They seemed to say: "Life has done this to me; I must die soon!" He could not bear

for her to go back into the gabbling, giggling throng with that anguished confession in her wide eyes. He was on the point of raising the window like a burglar and speaking to her at any cost when she suddenly sprang to her feet and hastened forward to meet Mrs. Thurston, who was looking for her.

Later he thought that would have been a mistake. In the first place, he was sure of her now. He did not know why, but he was sure of his wife. Some influence more powerful than he could have willed protected her.

Any woman, so assured, would have sought a reconciliation, but that is the difference between a man and a woman. They are much shrewder students of woman than even the assistant God, who makes women. John knew that if he kept his wife he must not show the white feather, must never admit that he was wrong and that she was right. This is the same policy practised by parents in managing their children. You must not admit that you are fallible to your son or your daughter. They will find it out soon enough. It is a very good policy for a man to adopt toward his wife. She knows, always knows, how wrong he is, how unjust to her.

But so long as he never admits that, she is compelled to accept his illusion of himself.

But from this night when he saw Olive alone with her terror behind the palms, John was in a hurry to ring down the curtain upon this act and to lay the scene for the next one. It was characteristic of the man that he did not doubt his ability to do that. He had been bitterly angry with her. He had thought his way through that red fog to a better understanding of her and of his own limitations. But never at any time had he entertained the possibility of losing her. She was his wife, a part of his flesh, and the wings of his spirit. There had not been a day since she left Valhalla when he was not prepared to keep her at no matter what cost. He did not know the meaning of the terror which he had seen so plainly written upon her face, so pitifully submissive in that inward vision of her eyes. But he knew by the deepest instinct of the protecting nature of man that she needed only one in all the world, and that was her husband.

When the heart, rather than the brain, furnishes the motive, we act differently. If this were not so, there would be no more romance in life. John was

about to accomplish the first dime-novel episode of his life. For, while his secret guardianship of Olive since her residence in Atlanta had somewhat the midnight mystery of fervid light literature, it was really as prosaic as that of a policeman, properly armed for that business. He was looking after his property, making sure that his title to it was good by the evidence Olive herself unconsciously furnished him. What he might have done if this evidence had proved a flaw is not a part of this narrative. But it is safe to predict that Dickie Blake would not have survived. His life in these days depended upon the certainty John had of Olive's faithfulness to herself, her own honour, however doubtful he may have been of her loyalty to her husband. He could and would take care of that.

It was late in February when he first observed the change in her. He returned to Valhalla, and began to cast about for ways and means to accomplish his purpose. He was very restless. A week of snow, followed by rains, held up work at the Foundry. Old Mr. Berry, Anna's father, had been installed as manager of the hardware store since the beginning of the year. Time hung heavy upon

his hands when he felt that time was most precious.

One day he came into the store after a long tramp over the muddy road from the Foundry. He picked up the afternoon paper, sat down before the red-hot stove, and turned as usual to the society page. The first item that met his eye was the announcement of a mask ball to be given on the twenty-eighth of February at the Georgia Terrace, for the benefit of the Belgium Relief Fund. The patrons and patronesses alone would come without masks. Among these John found Mr. and Mrs. Richard Thurston. The list of guests followed. It was to be an exclusive affair for which invitations were issued. And like Abou ben Adhem, the name of Mrs. John Arms led all the rest. Apparently there was no one else in the "A" class, for immediately below came the name of "Mr. Richard Blake." The association was alphabetical, of course, but to John the order seemed sinister. It may have been the glow from the stove which turned the paper red, but more likely he was seeing things red.

In the last paragraph there were some pleasant predictions about the gaiety of the occasion. "Guests have been requested to choose characters prominent

in the latter part of the eighteenth and the earlier years of the nineteenth century. There is much speculation as to what great figures of history will be represented. Already Dame Rumour has heard that a certain beautiful young married woman who has been much admired here this winter will come as Marie Antoinette, and it is reported by the same authority that a popular clubman will appear as Lafayette. No one seems to know who will dare the rôle of George Washington, but we are reasonably sure of Benjamin Franklin. Guests will unmask at midnight, after which supper will be served in the famous white and green dining-room."

John's memory of history was hazy, but he thought he recalled the fact that the gallant young French officer had been packed off to America to fight the Indians and the British after he had been caught in the palace garden kissing the young Queen's hand too fervidly.

Well, so help his God and his own good right arm, it would not get so far as compromising the Queen with kisses this time! He would attend to Lafayette, he thought moodily, as he rolled the paper, stuffed it into his overcoat pocket, and went home.

Mrs. Arms noticed that he did not open his ledgers that evening. He sat smoking and staring with singular animation into the fire. As a rule, live coals fix the expression. But John's features were startlingly active, not pleasant to behold. He had the appearance of a man who must get up presently, go outside, and commit a crime which was his duty.

"Mother," he said, finally, breaking the silence, "you remember Grandmother's chest?"

"Yes, it's in the attic. Why?"

"Well, I was thinking about it, the things in it."

The old lady laughed.

"We used to think about it a good deal before she died. You know she would never allow one of us to lift the lid; carried the key as long as she lived. That made your father and me very curious to know what was in it."

"But afterward you opened it, I remember."

"Yes, immediately after the funeral. Your grandmother was a queer woman; very silent. We thought she might have a lot of gold hidden in it. We were terribly disappointed."

"No gold, then?"

“Not even a copper. We didn’t have coppers then, anyway. Nothing in it but a lot of Indian relics. Indian clothing, rather, if you could call such things clothes. Your father thought she had them from some Chief back there in Virginia. But we never knew really how she came by them.”

“But you kept them?”

“Oh, yes; I scattered a lot of camphor gum and Chinaberry leaves among them to keep the moths out. You were just a little fellow then, John. I remember how excited you were then, and how you were always wanting to go up there and get the things out. At last you forgot all about them.”

“No, I never did forget. I’ve thought of that chest a thousand times. You know, Mother, those Indian togs are valuable.”

“I doubt that.”

“Yes, they are. I want to go up there to-night and look them over. Mind if I do?”

“Of course you may. The key’s in the lock and you’ll find the chest just under the window by the stairs.”

He turned as he was about to leave the room.

“If they are in any state of preservation, I shall

take them with me to Atlanta to-morrow and have them cleaned up," he said.

"You are going again?" she asked, looking round at him.

"Yes. Can't do anything here; weather is too bad. May be away several days. Better get Anna to come over and stay with you at night."

It was sadly like the old times, she thought with a sigh, before Olive came, to be asking Anna to stay with her when John was away. She did not want to do it. Either Anna had changed, or Olive's lively, affectionate ways had spoiled her, for she did not find Anna so companionable as she used to be. The girl always talked, when she talked at all, as if she avoided what she was really thinking about. And of what was she thinking, the old lady wondered with cruel impatience.

.

The ballroom of the Georgia Terrace never presented so gay and splendid an appearance as upon the night of the mask ball. It was as if all the hoopskirt figures in Godey's Lady's Book had stepped from those highly coloured prints into this wide hall. How modest they were from the waist

down, how innocently immodest they were almost from the waist up, these pretty women! What romantic fashions they had in those days, and how well the cavalier clothes of the men matched those of the women. Such mincing as they courtesied their way through the throng, such tinkling laughter, what pretty red lips and round chins, and dainty noses beneath their masks. And how many laughing eyes showed through the dark dominoes. Everybody was somebody else, shriven of his or her modern self, mimicking the characters and charms of men and women of an elder day. What enchantment to be Lady Lespinasse, sighing for a recreant lover, when usually you were only Caroline Tompkins engaged to Charlie Kidd, who was so near to being a husband he had almost ceased to be a lover.

The patrons and patronesses sat at one end of the hall talking together, guessing who this one was and who that one must be.

"Where is Olive, Sarah?" asked Thurston, turning to his wife.

"She will be coming presently. I left her before the mirror in the dressing-room fussing with her crown. She's afraid it will fall off when she courtesies."

"You should have reminded her that the Queen never does except to the King."

"I did tell her—there she comes now!"

A figure entered the room through a door at the far end. Her gown of white brocade flowed back from beneath the folds of a royal purple robe edged with a wide border of ermine. The tips of her slippers appeared and disappeared like the points of golden lilies. The robe drooped from her shoulders. A single pearl glistened like a tear upon her breast, held there by a mere thread of gold about her neck, so round and fair. The face above was clear white, not a vestige of colour, except the black domino drawn across the eyes, and the red lips proudly prim. The dark curls were piled high upon the stately head, only one escaping from the coiffure behind lying like a ring of smoke upon her shoulder. Upon the curls rested a crown of fine gold, scattering pale rays of light from many gems. She carried a very old lace fan. Two pages dressed in silver and gold walked behind bearing her train.

"The Queen!" announced the magnificent person at the door.

Instantly the guests parted into two lines, sank

gracefully upon their knees, and the poor little Queen moved slowly down this aisle between the smiling faces and bowed heads, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

If Marie Antoinette herself had stepped from the dust of centuries dark and deep with all the horrors of the Revolution still in her thought, she could not have made a presence more nobly tragic.

“How on ^{any} earth did she manage that effect, not the clothes, but that proud anguish!” whispered one Colonial lady to another Colonial lady.

“It’s because the King is not present. You know he never is. Some of us are beginning to wonder if the Queen isn’t a grass widow!” answered the other.

No throne had been provided for the Queen, so when she was near Mr. and Mrs. Thurston she turned to receive her Court.

They were not so slow. Lords and ladies and grand dames of every country flocked round her, keeping up for a time the mimicry of Court manners, then dissolving and swinging into the graceful figures of a minuet when the music began.

At this moment, just as the dancers were taking

their places, a young nobleman approached the Queen. He wore white satin breeches fastened at the knees with ribbons, elaborately embroidered hose, silver buckles upon his shoes, a ruffled shirt with frills of lace from his sleeves, much gold braid upon his coat; a magnificent crimson cloak hung from his shoulders. And he carried a sword.

"If your Highness would deign to honour the humblest of her servants!" he said, bowing his powdered wig low before her.

"No, the Queen dances only with the King to-night," she answered, smiling coldly. So Lafayette stood talking to the Queen, by no means pleased with the advantage she had taken of her royal rôle to refuse the dance.

"I wonder if old Sapp really thinks he looks like Benjamin Franklin in that ridiculous rig!" he said, nodding in the direction of an old man who was posing as "Poor Richard."

"George Washington is worse; looks like a Dutchman, too fat and far too short," she answered.

"I wonder who that little cricket is with the thin legs, in the black satin breeches," said one of the patronesses seated just behind them.

"That," answered the Queen, smiling, "is Sir Horace Walpole. Don't you remember he said he had the 'bones of a lark'?"

"Well, in his place I'd never have exposed them so publicly," snorted Thurston.

"And the stout courtier with him is Sir Horace Mann. They were chums, you know," some one explained.

"Had I been guillotined before Sir Horace made a practice of coming to Paris to flirt every spring?" asked the Queen.

"You had, my poor dear!" laughed her uncle.

"I'm sorry. I should have liked to meet him," she said whimsically.

The minuet was in full swing. The young Queen permitted Lafayette to lead her round the circling throng.

"Richard, look!" gasped Mrs. Thurston, seizing her husband by the arm.

"What? Where?" he exclaimed, flirting his head quickly in both directions.

"There, between the column and the palms."

They beheld an astonishing apparition. An Indian of enormous stature stood gazing through

the figures of the dance at the Queen and her escort. He wore a headdress of feathers which hung to his heels behind. A rough garment of skins reached only halfway to his knees. A wampum belt about his waist caught the light from a thousand beads. His shoulders were covered with a red blanket which stuck out on the sides like half-lifted wings. The skin of his legs above his mocassins and upon his breast glistened like polished copper. But the terrible thing was the face, as old as the earth, as rigid as death, when a man dies triumphant in pain—age-old courage, age-old cruelty, and the calm of the ages, it was all painted a deeper rose copper upon that terrific countenance. The man stood leaning upon a long rifle with his powder horn hanging from beneath the folds of his blanket.

“Good God!” exclaimed Thurston, starting up, “that *is* an Indian. No white man could look like that.”

By this time the dancers had also caught sight of him, and they reeled through the last figures with their eyes turned back over their shoulders, wide with astonishment.

“Oh, did you see him?” cried a little countess, ready to faint.

“Yes, and he wore no domino, either. What’s become of him?”

“Vanished!” said another.

“Can’t imagine who it can be,” said one of the patrons.

“Well, we’ll know at midnight even as we are known,” chanted a lady who thought she was dressed as Camille. “I fear nothing. I have long since accepted the proverb of my nation—when tempted, yield as soon as possible and avoid the struggle! Let the heathen rage. I’m the vain thing! Indians are heathens, aren’t they?”

A chorus of laughter approved Camille. Confidence was restored. Cavaliers began to chase pretty dominoes who eluded them, and finally permitted themselves to be captured. Everybody was flirting with everybody, having left their own virtues at home to assume the romantic vices of sweeter ladies and bolder knights.

The dance was about to begin again. A quadrille this time. The music sounded a quaint and seductive measure which set the blood to singing.

The Queen returned, followed by her Cavalier. She stood watching the slow and stately dance.

"Olive, my dear," Mrs. Thurston pulled vulgarly at the Queen's robe, causing Her Highness to bend a listening ear. "Have you seen the Indian?" whispered her aunt.

"No. Where?" her glance scouring the crowd.

"He was over there just now. He was perfectly terrible. We can't imagine who he is. Your uncle vows he is a real savage."

"Absurd! He's probably nothing more savage than a member of the Capital City Club," she laughed.

Then she thought of something, and turned to her companion.

"The Queen will dance!" she said.

He placed one hand upon his breast, bowed low, and offered his arm.

"But not with Lafayette. We are informed that there is an Indian Chief here from our American Province. Did we have an American province during our reign?" she laughed, and went on. "We will dance with our loyal Chief. Go! Tell him the Queen bids him come to her."

"A token, My Queen! You send me upon a dangerous mission. They—they gave a ring—a signet or something to their messengers, didn't they?" he concluded lamely, being unaccustomed to the ways of royalty.

The Queen wore but one ring, a plain gold band on her third finger. She looked at it, hesitated at the sacrilege, then drew it off and dropped it carelessly into the outstretched palm of her courier.

"Say that it is from the Queen, and that he must restore it to her within this hour—or sacrifice his life!" she said, with an air of magnificent authority.

Lafayette swaggered down the long room and disappeared between the column and the palms, where the Indian had made of himself a brief and terrifying apparition.

"Olive," whispered Thurston, rising, "your aunt's all in. Gone now to put on her things. Headache from being in this crowded place. I must take her home. The Warrens will look after you and bring you home after the shindig is over."

"But I'm tired, too. I'd rather go now with you," said the pale little Queen, looking at him wistfully.

"Never do! You are masked, part of the show. Must stay until time to take that black smear off your pretty face."

"Very well," she sighed, remembering that she must wait for her ring.

"It's all right. I've spoken to the Warrens," he said, patting her shoulder and hastening after his wife.

The Queen saw her courier approaching. He was not swaggering. He was striding like a man who was using all his presence of mind to keep from breaking into a run. He was obviously contending with an emotion nearer kin to fear than Lafayette ever felt.

"Gad! but I've had a narrow escape," he panted. "Is my scalp on?"

"Yes, it evidently is. But your wig is awry. What happened? Did you meet the Chief?"

"Lord, yes! He's sitting over there in that swamp of rubber trees, with a gun as long as I am across his knees!"

"You delivered our message?"—endeavouring to maintain the royal manner, though she was merry at the sight of this dishevelled courier.

"I did, and the ring. Had to do that. He snatched it from me. Said he'd attend upon Your Highness within the hour.—Say, Olive, are my knees knocking together?"—dropping his pose.

"Why?"

"By George! that's no white man. An Indian, as sure as I live, and with murder in his heart."

"You are silly!"

"You'd be silly, too, if a red savage made a grab for you in a ballroom. I swear he did that. Just did escape by jumping over one of those green tubs."

"Somebody is playing his part well."

"I tell you he isn't playing. He's in earnest. Wouldn't surprise me if he leaped out of there with a whoop and scalped a nobleman. I am going to speak to Warren. That man's no guest."

"Don't be ridiculous. Here comes Sir Horace Walpole. We must rise from our dust and play the Queen."

And she did for another hour, with a charm and a gracious dignity which queens rarely show.

It was after eleven o'clock when she finally withdrew from the grandiloquent circle which surrounded her and moved away, accompanied by Lafayette,



“ The next moment the masqueraders were astonished to see a knight falling head over heels to the ballroom floor ”

who had sufficiently recovered from his encounter with the Indian to fix his attention upon his own plans. Apparently the Queen had plans, too, for she allowed herself to be conducted to a gallery which ran around the ballroom, one flight up, and which was a jungle of tall plants and flowers.

"Let's drop this bombastic foolishness and be ourselves, Olive," he said.

"Agreed," she answered wearily, as she sank upon one of the seats. "I am tired of it—and the other foolishness, too, Dickie."

"What other foolishness?" he demanded quickly.

"You know. I've tried to show you that it's offensive to me."

"Well, you haven't succeeded, my pretty Queen. On the contrary, you have convinced me that it's the only thing you care for in the world," he laughed, looking down at her with an air of possession.

"I came here to talk to you, Dickie. I want to make you understand."

"Come! drop your mask to me, Olive. I know you. Play the game. It's time to look the facts in the face. We love each other. We——"

"Hush!" she whispered, raising her hand. "I never have loved you, and now I despise——"

"Drop it! You have done nothing else but encourage me these months. You followed me——"

"Followed you?" she gasped.

"Yes. From Valhalla. Oh!" he laughed, "I saw you that day walking along the street with a basket on your arm, like a laundress. I heard you call me! In less than a week you were here. You had left your husband—for me!"

"You wretch!" she exclaimed, rising.

"Stay where you are!" he commanded, and she dropped upon the seat lest he should force her back.

"We are both tarred with the same brush, Olive," he went on, standing before her with folded arms. "We are neither of us good people. We hate dull virtue. You do, at least, or you would not be here—with me, my dear. And we can afford the extravagance. I can give you everything you crave and must have. We——"

"You insult me! You forget I'm a married woman!" she cried.

"I couldn't insult you, my love. And we can

both forget—that you were married once upon a time.”

“And I love my husband!”

“Tell that to the marines! Why don’t you live with him then?”

“I’m going home to him to-morrow,” she whispered, looking at him with terror-stricken eyes.

“You are going home with *me* to-night, my Queen; to-morrow or next day we will be aboard my yacht at Newport News. And then you’ll be where you belong! That ring you wore, it’s gone! And don’t you remember Lafayette kissed the Queen in the garden?”

He took a step forward, bent, with his arms outstretched. Olive did not move. Her eyes were fixed upon some object beyond him with a terror so wild—— A mere instant, and then before he could touch her, he felt himself grasped from behind, held as in a vise of iron.

He beheld the face of the Indian, distorted with rage, close to his own.

He would have shouted, called for help. But he could make no sound. He merely gasped as he felt himself lifted and borne through the rustling

leaves of the palms to the banisters round the gallery.

The next moment the masqueraders were astonished to see a knight falling head over heels to the ballroom floor.

Wild confusion followed. Men shouted, ladies shrieked and fainted.

"John, oh, John! If he had touched me, I should have died!" cried Olive, falling upon her husband's breast.

"Come, we must get out of this quick," he whispered, rushing with her to the stairs which led to the Forsyth Street entrance.

"John, are we going home—like this?" cried the little Queen, half laughing, as the taxi swung round corners at a furious speed.

"We are, we must. Just time to catch the midnight train. I left my overcoat and your old cloak at the station. We'll manage!"

"You can trust me now, John!"

He lifted her face. Again that look, not of the wife nor of the maid, poignant prophecy of pain, of all the terror of a woman's heart, and of perfect submission.

"Yes," she whispered, answering his deep gaze. Then closing her eyes as if not even to him could she reveal this sweet terror of herself.

"I did not know—until it was too late. Oh, John, forgive me! You can trust me now."

"You love me, my sweet! You love me!" he whispered, drawing her closer.

"You were so long saying that, John. So many times I asked you, but you never once asked me if I loved you," she answered, smiling sadly.

"I'm not asking now. I know that you love me at last. And now I no longer trust myself at all, dear; I believe only in you. God! It is sweet to trust a woman and to know that there is no end to this dear faith!"

Being a man, he did not consider how much he was indebted to nature for this victory. And if Olive knew, she refused to admit that, even to herself.

.

Mr. Thurston and his wife were in the drawing-room. He was twiddling his thumbs, which was a habit he had. She lay back in her chair with her eyes closed, sniffing at a bottle of smelling salts.

They were waiting for Olive. Somewhere in the house a clock struck once.

"That's half-past eleven. It will be two hours before she comes in. I think I'll go to bed," said Mrs. Thurston, rising languidly.

"Well, I'll stay up. I want to know who the Indian was," he answered, settling himself for a doze.

"It's my belief you'll never find out. Somebody who was not invited, playing a joke. He'll slip out before they unmask," she said from the bottom of the stairs.

The telephone bell rang violently, the way it always rings at night when people are supposed to be asleep.

"Don't get up, Richard; I'll answer it," she called to him.

He heard her talking excitedly over the 'phone. He supposed some one was telling her about the Indian.

"Well, did you find out who he is?" he asked, as she came hastily into the room.

"Oh, that girl will be the death of me," she cried, falling into a chair.

"What girl? Who are you talking about?"—staring at her.

"Olive. She's eloped again, Richard!"

"Olive—eloped!" he shouted, leaping from his chair.

"Yes, she has. And she always leaves me with this whole town to explain things to. It's an outrage!" holding the smelling salts to her nose.

"Not—— My God, don't tell me she's gone with that cur, Blake!" cried the old man.

"Of course not. What are you thinking of! She's gone with the man she always elopes with, John Arms!"

"Why didn't you say so then, Sarah! By George——"

"I *did* say so, Richard. I've just told you. He was the Indian. Olive called me from the station. They've taken the midnight train for Valhalla. And I hope, I do *hope* he'll keep her this time if he has to wear her like—like a charm on his watch chain!" she concluded, dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief.

Thurston stood before the open fire, head bent,

looking sidewise at his wife, a slow grin spreading over his handsome old hawk face.

“What have you against that young fellow Arms, Sarah?” he asked after a long pause.

“What have I against him! When I’ve prayed for him to come as I never prayed for my own soul, with Olive too sick to eat her breakfast in the morning, and too foolish to send Blake about his business in the evening. Still,” she added, sniffing, “I don’t see why he can’t act like a civilised man and not be always running off with his wife. And I don’t believe he is. I believe he’s an Indian. I told Olive so the first time I ever saw him.”

“Well, now that everything has turned out right, I’ll tell you something. I’ve been gambling on Arms—to the tune of ten thousand dollars, and then some.”

“I didn’t know you had ever even seen the man, Richard.”

“I haven’t; but you know Olive talked a lot about him when she first came up——”

“She hasn’t mentioned his name for a month!”

“—and I gathered from what she said that he was a pretty good sort. Kind of man who would

make his own way. So I took a chance—with her money, too. When he wanted to borrow money from the Fourth National Bank, Oatleigh, the Vice-President, came to me about it. I told him to go ahead, lend him all he needed, and I'd take up the notes. He's borrowed like a gambler or like a man with grit in his gizzard."

"You let him have Olive's money?"

"I did. Better than investing it in stocks and bonds with this war playing hell with securities. From all I can find out, and I've been at some expense to investigate, he's got a big thing in that iron foundry. He'll be worth a couple of millions in ten years."

"Then Olive is not married to a hardware merchant?" asked the old lady, pulling this thorn out of her pride.

"Shouldn't wonder if she had landed the biggest fish in the country. Depends somewhat upon whether the armies in Europe succeed in ripping up all the railroads and blowing up all the bridges. There's bound to be a tremendous market for iron and steel soon or late. Ten thousand, however, is less than half he needs. I'm thinking of running

out to Valhalla in the morning, just to make the young rip's acquaintance, and talk some sense to him. I reckon he'll come round when he finds out I've got his notes. Good way as any to invest part of Olive's fortune. Want to go with me?" he asked, after a pause.

"No, I do not! I've had enough of Olive and her Indian for the present. I'm going to bed and stay there a week. I've been on the verge of nervous prostration for months. If you had eyes in your head, you'd know that, Richard, after all I've been through."

"It has been pretty rough for you, my dear. I've worried some myself, not much. I've been on the point of going to Valhalla once or twice and swearing at that damn fool. But it's all over now. And, thank God! we didn't spoil the dough. Mighty easy thing to do sometimes!"

He slipped his arm around her. They went upstairs together.

"Richard," said his wife an hour later, "are you asleep?"

"I was, Sarah"—in injured tones. "What is it now?"

“I was just wondering if they’d name the baby for me. They ought to, you know.”

“The baby? Oh, that, my dear, I should think would depend entirely upon the natural phenomenon of gender. They’ll probably call him Richard,” he answered, flirting over and drawing the covers closer.



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